With all happy remembrances,
from,
M.B.R.

THE MANUSCRIPT

A Review of Prose and Poetry

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Published by the
MANUSCRIPT CLUB, LONDON,
1916

Copies may be obtained from the Secretary,
At 6 Maze Road, Kew, Surrey.

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall the word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

FOREWORD.

1916 *has passed away; and we look back along "the arches of the years."*

The figure at the closed Gate of the Past has ever a bowed head. Her palms are pressed in vain appeal against the relentless portal; or her fingers have seized the bars as though they would gladly shatter them. Yet rarely do we meet one willing to have his life again. When the west glows, we are conscious of a vague tenderness towards the Day, simply because the Night is here.

This chagrin of the Past, when it is not a sentimental luxury, is in the main regret: the natural penalty of gifts neglected, regret perhaps not quite untinged with scorn that we have asked so little of that which might have yielded much.

It is also true that the Past wins from "being far" a Turneresque beauty.

"The grey veils of the half-light deepen; colour dies." It is not that the absence of colour has in itself a claim to beauty; but the Past, like the Future, is spared the crudeness of detail. And with regard to these details, how whimsical is Memory! How often it is difficult, even impossible, to say why on this one or on that of all the fleeting moments, the signet of remembrance was pressed!

We speak of the healing power of Time, and the expression is not a euphemism for ignoble forgetfulness. This healing power, is it not rather the wise ministration of Beneficent Necessity perpetually eliminating the untrue?

Let us not take for granted that Retrospect is sad. The epic of Age has still to be written; and it is worth writing. Not only of the last oblation, but of every wayside sacrifice, it has been said: post funera phœnix.

SELF ISOLATION

"THOU shalt" and "Thou shalt not," I hear them say,
But tear the scroll across, and go my way
Alone towards the east in search of light,
Blindfold upon a precipice at night.
Perchance in solitary anguish I shall lie
Upon the jagged rocks, impaled thereby.

Then will the world exclaim—"Self centred soul,
"'Twere better had you read the written scroll,
"And gained the heights advancing to the day
Where lies the hope of truth." Well,—let them say.

Perchance I shall escape the perilous edge,
And groping forward reach the broadening ledge
Whereon I firmly stand, and pluck away
The bandage from my eyes, and see the ray
Of truth they seek for, broadening with the light
That rims the east, dissevering day from night.

Then will the world exclaim,—"Great fearless soul
Who strove with mighty purpose to unroll
The truth we blindly sought for but in vain;
Who, setting by the shackles which constrain,
Broke through to freedom, gaining thus the goal.
Applaud we then with honour, fearless soul."

I hear them not whate'er their matter be,
I only seek the light they cannot see,
In splendid isolation I remain
Though I lose all or all attain.

F. J. POPHAM

WHITBY ABBEY

SINCE man hath fashioned it,
So Time the Prevailing
Sweeps his effacing hand
Over its loveliness.
Blots out its beauty,
Mars its fair form.

Gone is the builder's art
Wherewith 'twas manifest;
Spilt is the holy wine
Wherewith 'twas sanctified;
Psalms sung by holy monks,
Prayers raised by God's own priests,
Passed 'neath a stronger power,
Time's mightier function.

Lo! where the holy flame
Burnt by the altar,
Moonlight breaks clear and white
Through broken chancel.
Roofless the ruin stands
Of what was lovely,
Wrecked in the sea of Time,
Washed by the waves of years,
Silence pervading it,
Crumbled and broken.

F. J. Popham

AFTERWARDS

WE must rebuild this sacred fane
When peace is on her throne again,
Plan it with ampler liberty
Worthy of glorious days to be;
Gather the scattered shards and bring
New beauty out of suffering;
Project anew more perfect piers,
With faith serener after tears,
Rear it in sumptuous girth and scope
With truer truth, more hopeful hope.

So shall the new creation rise
In ecstasy before men's eyes,
When all the bitter swarming hates
That love in turn annihilates
Shall change to rich imaginings,
Tier upon tier of sculptured things,
The domes and pinnacles and spires
Of hallowed dreams and high desires,
Memorials of the human soul
Gathered in one consummate whole.

Edwin Stanley James

A WINTER SONG

I SHALL be glad when summer is over,
Fled with the last of her wild good-byes;
When crushed is the rose and withered the clover,
Chill the river and blind the skies;
When trails of smoke that merge in the mist
Mark the last of the leaves that burn;
And the lovers lament for the lips they kissed.
I shall be glad when the snow returns.

Here in the grass, where the bent bough dapples
The orchard floor with a frivolous shade
When the sun slides down to colour the apples,
And gild the distance for man and maid;
Oh, all the lovers, for all their mirth,
Have seen that my heart, for all its song,
Is the greyest thing on the radiant earth;
I shall be glad when the nights are long.

There in the dusk of the cheerful ingle,
Spinning and singing the hours away,
My voice with the voices of all shall mingle,
I shall be tranquil, even as they;
Nor care though a pause in the wheel's low hum
May find me silent. For aught they know,
I may be dreaming of summers to come,
Counting the days till the violets blow.

MYFANWY PRYCE

GREY EYES

I KNEW a man with brown eyes;
He had a silver tongue.
He loved me in the South-countree,
When we were both young.

I knew a man with blue eyes,
Blue eyes and laughing gaze.
He loved me in the valley land,
In the golden days.

I knew a man with black eyes;
He swept me off my feet.
He loved me on the mountain-side,
In the wind and sleet.

I knew a man with grey eyes;
He had a heart of gold.
He loved me in the North-countree,
When we were grown old.

MYFANWY PRYCE

WORSHIP

O PALLID priest, so worshipful
Before the wounded feet of Christ,
With bloody feet the world is full,
And still the Lamb is sacrificed!
Lay down the censer of the Lord,
And swing aloft a flaming sword!

Not passive in the howling street,
Nor dabbled with the blood of pain,
Nor walking slow on bruiséd feet,
Shall Man, the Master, come again!
The twilight of your dogma fades,
When Christ is at the barricades.

The gaunt and ruthless gods of strife
With eager shouting we invoke,
White gleams the sacrificial knife
And Thor is in our thunderstroke;
Too long our knees have ached in vain,
We stretch our limbs and stand again!

O pallid priest, so worshipful
Before the wounded feet of Christ,
With bloody feet the world is full,
And still the lamb is sacrificed!
Lay down the censer of the Lord,
And fling aloft the flaming sword!

FRANCIS ANDREWS

SPRING

APRILS that flamed and fled,
Thorn crowned and petal shod,
Scattering white and red
Over the hills of God;
Left my fool's heart unstirred,
Song of your April bird,
Sigh of your almond tree,
Ah, but a voice I heard
"Charity, Charity!"
One with imploring lips,
One with an open hand,
Stood neath my hawthorn tree,
Spring in my wisdom's land.
All songs of small birds flew
Into his heart with wings
Silver and gold and blue;
All joy, all happy things,
Frail like the wind-flower grew
In his love's wood.
In rings,
Silver and amethyst,
Dreams of an hundred springs
Bloomed where my hot lips wist
Only the boon love brings.

Ah Love of cruel lip,
Ah Love of greedy hand . . . . . .
Spring comes in search of me,
Spring in a foreign land.
Now the white hawthorn tree
Lifts up to Heaven, Ah me,
Two gentle hands;
And the pink maytree glows
Colour of crimson rose,
Two trembling lips it has;
No joy that to me creeps
But tells of you, and weeps;
No laughter in my ears
But spells your name in tears;
No leaf upon a tree
But whispers "Charity".

MARION PRYCE

THE LINNETS IN THE SLUMS

UNDER a grey-ceiled sky,
Among the chink and stir and worry of life in the kitchen,
Where fire flashes in furniture, and stars in a copper pan
Winked and went out with the warmth,
They watched, from their narrow cages, with sparkling bead eyes
The coming and going of days, the set and the rise
Of the fire. Grown sleepy and wise,
They blinked with their heads on one side,
While the days drew into weeks;
Or sobbed, burying in little puffed breasts twittering beaks,
Forgetting the whisper of leaves, the music of rain,
Remembering the moon as an old clock face in the corner,
Sleeping when sleep was a horror, and waking a pain,
Under the crouching clouds of the low grey ceiling.

And April came over the unwashed floors,
April peered in at the panes,
And tapped at the dingy doors.
Hands lifted the cages down and carried them out,
And set them forth in the sunshine, liquid and thin,
High in the flickering golden colour of straw,
Those narrow wire cages, habitations of springtime,
Housing the flutter and whispering uproar of small birds within.
And they blinked, and stuttered, the linnets, and sang once more.
Sang of the little black kitchen,
And sang of the pans in the kitchen,
And the chairs and the clock in the kitchen.
Over and over they sang of the black slum kitchen.

Marion Pryce

TO A GHOST

COME again and sing again
In the dusk to me.
Come and sing to me again
In my misery.

Come again and sing again.
Others will but hear
A faint wail in the rain,
A wind in the fir.

I will listen as of old,
Turn my face away,
Better so the spell to hold
Against a gray day.

Staring at the sombre sky
As I used to stare,
I can almost think you nigh,
Close behind my chair.

Yet I only hear the rain,
The wind in the tree.
Oh come again and sing again
In the dusk to me.

Myfanwy Pryce

SOMETIMES

SOMETIMES,—when night has hung her net of stars
Across the lamp-blue panoply of sky ;
And the white moonshine gilds the shadowed towers
Of the great, sleeping giant, London town,—
Down the dim starbeams slide a faerie host,
To wash the stained soul of the city free
By the sweet magic of a revelry
Of dreams.

Sometimes,—when, o'er her, misty mornings throw
Their rosy spell of mellow Autumn light,
And dome and spire send soft, grey fingers up
Into the curling spirals of the smoke,
And down the narrow, noisy city streets
The sun sends gold-dust stairways from the sky,
A laughing sprite—with fleet, rogues mischief—tempts
To dreams.

But most it is,—where—very far from here,
A quiet village nestles in the hills,
Where mossy elms invite to vistaed walks
And pulsing bird-wings beat the sunny air,
Where kingcups' new-washed faces smile and gleam,
Amongst the leaves whose roots the water loves.
There would I lie—close to the warm, sweet earth
Among the heather and the butterflies,
With the soft wind all whispering in the leaves,
And sunlight's myriad facets in my eyes,
And dream.

IVY RAY

TRALEE

I

A PESTILENCE upon the smell just here!
Small wonder if a plague did follow, sure!
The fumes of bad tobacco and worse beer,
Foul poisonous spirits, and as ill a leer
As a disloyal drunkard ever wore,
Sicken the heart. "And did the English lose?
Bad scran tiv 'em. It serves the dhivils right!"
That's what the men say: and Rebellion's blight
Has nipped the barefoot children, for they choose
The traitor watchwords, with instinctive hate,
And peeping from their noisome courts, will cry
"Up Germans!" as the soldiers pass them by:
The little fools!

II

Look at that man, half-right from where you stand!
He's Spanish—and they do say that the folk
Come of a stock which drifted to the land
In the great galleons haughty Philip's hand
Set on the heaving wave, ere Britain woke
Late, but in time, to slip its war-dogs out
Worrying the unwieldy hulks, till sea
And sky combined, and swore to guarantee
The favoured isles, twirling the ships in rout
Round the serrated coasts, where earth laid wait
To break them into pieces . . . . . That dark hag
Had ancestors beneath the golden flag,
So say the schools.

III

Here where the last ill-fated Desmond sought,
Deposed, a loftier throne from which to fall,
(In Erin thrones are hard, and shrifts are short);
Here where Slieve Mish invokes, with clouds athwart,
The very storms that mine his rocky wall;
Here where the stream runs milky in the moon
When the King's Kerry Cows were filched away
(And if you're disbelieving what I say
I'll take you to the place and show you soon;
Would God their facts had half their legends' weight);
Here lies a town will test our English laws,
There's metal here will show up tinker's flaws,
And dull edged tools!

IV

With yellow furze all flaming in the light
At blue lakes' heads, or down green meadows set,
This fallen heaven, now, to fay and sprite,
Is made of gold-encrusted malachite
With placid lapis lazuli inlet.
But God and man know what her beauty hides!
And when Hibernian temper rises o'er
The brink of reason, 'tis as if her shore
No longer held in check the roaring tides,
Which, sweeping up the clefts that lacerate
The land from Donegal to old Tralee,
Make of the MàcGillicuddy's but a quay,
And that all pools!

V

Then must the toil of ages be in vain?
Can Celt and Saxon never live in peace?
Shall Ulster still pour southward its disdain,
And Leinster still boast poverty and pain,
While Connaught's sons and daughters still decrease,
And Munster harbours treachery and guilt?
No! The redemption long denied shall light
At last, with olive leaves to heal the spite
Thou sufferest from. And lo, the iron hilt
Of fratricide sinks in the floods of fate,
Receding now, and casts, as all swords must,
The shadow-cross of suffering and trust . . .
And anger cools.

A. Gascoyne Richards

SAPPHICS: A SEA GULL

SNOW-WHITE stranger far from your home of waters
Proudly treading waves of the gorse and heather,—
Alien surges stirred by the mountain tempests
Bitter as ocean's.

Strongly winging over the towns and valleys,
Cold eyes scornful, full of the wide sea spaces,
Grey with gazing into the dim grey distance,
Bleared with the salt winds.

Voice untuned with music of land birds singing,
Hoarsely raised with never an answering clamour
Echoed, eddying, flung from the haunted eyries
Up to the heavens.

Feet untrained to the boughs of the deep-set forest,
Seeking ever crannies of windy headlands,
Virgin beaches strewn with the cast up seaweed,
Spoil of the waters,

Firths unsounded, loud with the waves resurgent
Forming, breaking, hurled into deep-mawed caverns,
North wind, South wind, rocking the sea birds lightly,
There shall your feet rest.

Heather, bracken, waste of the rolling moorland,
Glad winds shouting up from the winding valleys,
Blithely stirring waves of the gorse and heather,—
Shall they not stay you?

* * * * * * * * *

Languor, softness, silence of death eternal
Here lie brooding over the fells and ridges,
There for ever, borne by the austere sea-winds
Flutter my kindred.

Rising, falling, swayed by the deep sea billows,
Calling, calling, out of the spray and spindrift,
There I turn me out to the world of waters
Home to my eyrie.

EDWIN STANLEY JAMES

AT DUSK

FROM the wooded valley
With the stream's low laughter
Following after:
From leafy aisle and shadowy green-arched alley
Where the throstle sings:
From the bracken turning
Ruddy brown, and flaming
Into red, and claiming
All that autumn brings—

Leaving all the valley
I came when mists were rising
And disguising
Familiar places where the last gleams dally
When the sun is low.
Late had I been roaming
With the brambles catching,
Clutching in the gloaming:
Frightened at the snatching
Brambles, and the slow

Mists that wrapped the valley.
. . . . Dulled the stream's low laughter,
Following after . . . .
I hastened, for the strangest shapes might sally
From the shadows grim
Where the bracken flaunted.
Looking back I shivered—
Sure the place was haunted . . . .
Ah . . . . the bracken quivered
And the woods grew dim.

FRANCES H. EDWARDS

LOVE-IN-A-MIST

LOVE-in-a-mist art thou;
All tendril o'er thy neck and brow;
All o'er thine eyes; and tendrils now
Creep, creep, to bind; such art
Delilah ne'er displayed, Sweetheart!

Scentless, thou could'st despise
Thy garden peer. But odours rise
Faintly wherefrom each full-moon lies.
Ah me! what can dispense
Love's ecstasy like Love's incense?

Love in a mist am I.
When with my lips I fain would pry,
Tendrils of thine go floating by;
Thy lips find safe retreat;
Faint odours only—luring—greet.

JOHN HILL

LITTLE SAMUEL

AN intelligent gentleman rolled up the main street under a broiling sun. In rare antiques was he clothed. Upon the gentleman's chest hung an oblong board, and upon his back hung another. He helped to attract attention by beating an iron hoop with an iron stick. And he fell into every public house he met. This may also have been to attract attention. Some benevolent people intended to amuse the multitude, that evening, in Duggan's field. The world-renowned comedian, Little Samuel, had condescended to preside. Little Samuel had had the honour of opening the Grand Theatre, in London. (The following week, the Grand Theatre had had the honour of being converted into a museum). The merry individual had likewise performed before the German Crown Prince. None would be charged for the privilege of listening. Thus were the citizens warned by the boards that he carried.

I walked to Duggan's field when the fatal hour approached, and in the centre of it, perceived several citizens, male and female, surrounding a caravan. The owner of this field sleeps with one eye always open. Before my birth, the River Slaney used to flow uninterrupted where his meadow now stands. He had told the Corporation to dump their damn debris upon the beach. The Corporation, by dumping their damn debris upon the beach, had dammed a portion of the river. Thus can two damns make a blessing.

Leaning gracefully across the stone wall, I gazed at the caravan. A man, making a noise with his mouth, filled an aperture at one end. I dropped my eyes to the wheels and noticed that the Irish Sea was gradually rising from the rims to the axles. Thereupon, I thanked my inborn desire for getting to the roots of matters. Many respectable citizens were passing along

the road. More than a passing interest, they considered it vulgar to show in a free concert. I heard the entertainment by passing with them.

The jokes were funny and the singing was brilliant, one young lady, in particular, shining far above her companions. For ten minutes she shook her fist at the paraffin oil lamp overhead, imploring the moon and the stars to lend her their ears. When Little Samuel appeared, the citizens near the caravan splashed joyfully. The comedian wore red trousers, a red garsey and a smile. A moving artist, he succeeded in moving both the citizens and the caravan.

The manager next became visible and addressed the sea of faces in front, announcing that he had several two-penny post cards for sale. A sealed envelope hid every card. Three cards in every fifty bore a number. And the aimable individual, drawing a curtain, revealed a dazzling wealth of silver ware. Too deep was the thing for words.

Three pounds worth of two-penny tickets were sold in five minutes and lucky men received a watch and a silver teapot. Being rather curious to learn the quality of the jewellery, I decided to wait until a winner came ashore.

Very soon, I observed a man, swinging a silver teapot casually by the handle, and wading towards the gate. I met him, where he rested awhile, letting the water drip from his overcoat. Though the top buttons of the overcoat were absent, they told me all. In the lucky winner of the silver teapot, I recognized An Intelligent Gentleman and, in the lucky winner of the silver teapot, I also recognized Little Samuel.

Francis Carty

LUDLAM'S LANE

LUDLAM'S Lane, the bane and joy of my childhood, was not an ordinary road; but then there are no ordinary roads, every road is the one road for somebody, who has suffered, loved, lost, or won on it. It was extraordinarily beautiful in Spring, Summer and Autumn: it was uncommonly beastly in Winter, when even the cows were driven into it with reluctance. It ended by the front of our cottage, so you can rely on the word of one who knew the lane like his hand.

At the other end you came on a wood. I have seen many woods since, have often shouted before I have been out of one, but never have I seen such a treasure of woods elsewhere. I can't hurry now I am on Ludlam's Lane. It isn't one of the long, almost ordinary lanes that have no turning. It is all turning, a twistiness doubtless produced by a constant looking back at itself in Summer to admire its own loveliness, and in Winter by a

perpetual turning aside from the path to avoid its own puddles. As the lane is mostly on end, there are passable portions, but the level length just after you pass Scorer's orchard is a squelchy morass deep enough to peep in at the top of mens' leggings in order to see the colour of their stockings, and therefore more than enough to satisfy a boy's love of puddles.

Ugh! If you will excuse me we will not go up the lane until the March winds have dried the surface enough for small boys to hop from clod to clod without bemiring themselves unduly. What would be the use? If you did succeed in passing through without being plastered up to the eyes, and in the eyes, with mud, you would most assuredly get stuck the first step you took through the gates of the wood. Woodmen, who are no respecters of seasons, get their carts through by laying down poles and logs for the wheels to run on. To this day I am ignorant of how the followers of the first cart surmount the chevaux de frise left in the wake of the fortunate cart number one. Even a pole is not trod on with impunity. It will rise and smite you unless you hit it fairly and squarely in the middle. The poles laid across the track rise in remonstrance as the wheels rumble over them, and, having risen, fall no more, if the wheel has driven the one end it trod on at all firmly into the rut. No: Ludlam's Lane is no winter resort. Now, autumn:—Why not spring, say you? Why not indeed, for anything lovelier than my lane in spring it would puzzle you to find. And yet it is astonishing how many of my memory pictures glow with the tints of Autumn. Remember, Scorer's orchard gives one to the lane, and apples ripen in the fall. Speaking of falls, one of my earliest was off that very gate of Scorer's.

My memory tells me nothing before. It just places me on the gate with lumps about my person, as though my jacket and trousers were sticking their tongues in their cheeks, said cheeks being situated by the pockets. I fall from the top bar, I bellow, more from habit and because it is the thing expected of me, than because I am hurt. Ruth, two years older and five years wiser, knowing that an orchard isn't the best of places to bellow near when your person is lumpy and uneven about the pockets, seeks to soothe me, and attempts to bribe me to silence with—apples. I will have none of them—no more of them that is, and continue to bawl. Then memory switches the picture off. Next to Scorer's orchard is the kitchen field, across which a path runs from the lane to the Church, the clock of which you can see from the stile if your eyes are good, for the clock face is stained and weather worn.

It was on this stile that I sat down to investigate an unaccountable tickling about the big toe. I shook out of my boot a beetle, and I have a horror of beetles. The thought that I had had my toe tickled by a beetle was vivid enough to cling with me from childhood until now. It was no mystery how the beetle got in. The hole in the boot toe was "not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but 'twould serve." It was in the lane that I made my first observations on the problems of life. Until Joe Wass and Sally Ashley began frequenting the lane, I had held that courting was done once a

week after church: that it was a Sunday business only to be properly conducted in Sunday clothes, and the emblem of courtship was a flower in the buttonhole. It consisted of going for walks together, walking stiffly side by side, and when the business was far advanced, and the banns were published, they might walk hand in hand without causing scandal. It was left to outsiders from Palterton or Bolsover, who didn't know how to behave properly, to walk arm in arm. The behaviour of Joe and Sally in the lane rudely dispelled these illusions of what was the way of a man with a maid. Instead of once a week, they were always at it, morning, noon, and night: instead of walking stiffly side by side, or hand in hand, or even arm in arm, the twain walked as one, bound tightly together by arms twining all over them. That was when they walked, which was rarely. Their favourite spot was on the bank just past the beetle stile, where the lane bends its neck in order to pass comfortably under the hedges and trees which almost meet overhead. The branches are generally festooned with straw and hay scraped from the passing wains.

It was here that I first heard of Ludlam's dog, a beast I was to hear of very frequently later on:

"As idle as Ludlam's dog, that you are."
"And what did Ludlam's dog do?"
"He laid hissen down to bark."

But to dispose of Joe Wass and Sally Ashley. The high bank was draped with an emerald cloth of a beauty that would have dazzled a king, and was just right for a plough boy and his lass. I had always thought that Joe had good eyesight until I saw him on this bank holding his face close to Sally in order to see her properly. Mother Heath expressed her opinion of the two in my hearing: "It's scandalous how them two carry on, but it's too hot to last; young Joe's no better than he ought to be, and Sally's soft." Soft people, I thought, went sooner or later to Mickleover, where they kept a "Sylem," but Sally's softness was not the sort that called for Mickleover treatment. She hardened easily enough under a course of faithlessness and neglect on the part of the fickle Joe, who took himself off to another village, and Sally became respectable again, only courting Sunday nights in the orthodox fashion.

At this rate I shall not get you even to the middle of the lane, and I want to take you as far as the sheep-wash in any event. The lane runs steeply uphill from Joe's courting place, kept in hand for so far by steep banks, hedges and trees, but at the top of the ridge it shakes itself free, and gets out of hand, as did widow Mellor's donkey at this point when you brought him this way. Before we follow it down hill to the sheep-wash, let us rest a minute on the stile and admire the view. He never could have been a fat man who invented these Derbyshire stiles. I fancy he was some lean Mephistopheles, who harboured a grudge against his better favoured brethren, and so concocted

those narrow slits between two stout, unyielding pillars of stone. A lean man may just squeeze through ; a stout one must assuredly hoist himself over if he would pass.

The bottom portion of this stile is blocked with a stone slab not unlike half a tombstone, and folks who have crossed the fallow field on a wet day find it handy to scrape their boots on. The very thought of this stile makes my back ache, for I have brought many an aching back to it for temporary respite, lodging the offending bundle of gleaned corn on one of the stone pillars as a convienient " take off " when the rest cure was complete.

I am tempted to follow this foot path to call at the lonely house at the "four-lane-ends." You would have to call during daylight hours to gain admittance, for, after dark, your knock would bring terror to the heart of the tottering old dame within, and she would not take down bars and chains, or remove the chairs, coal-scuttle, and goodness knows what, that she piled every night against the door to strengthen it, until you had answered a string of questions, proved by tone of voice and height as gauged through the keyhole, that you were the son of the man you claimed to be, and then, when at last all obstructions were removed and she had the door on the chain, her terror would return, and she would either do her business with the door between you, or she would tell you to come back in the morning. I got in once by offering my fat cheeks to be felt at through the narrow gap allowed by the door-chain.

I also had to poke my fingers through, and half expected to hear her say, like the old witch of the fairy tale : " Not fat enough yet," which would have been unreasonable, for my fat was famous. We have only just time to peep at the sheep-wash, leaving the intervening stretch of lane, with its ample margin of grass and thistles, to Widow Mellor's donkey. I should not make all this fuss to get you as far as the sheep-wash if that was all there is to be seen.

A sheep-wash is great fun if you have plenty of lively sheep and are short of men to prevent them leaping to the other side of the wash and making a dash for freedom. Sheep like washing as little as boys.

All this could be seen elsewhere, not so well, nor in such picturesque surroundings, but seen it could be. Why I have pulled and tugged to get you as far is because of the trout stream that runs clean across the lane. You either splash through it, jump across it, take the stepping stones, or else you leave the lane in its company, and run, singing with it, through the valley, till you come to the spot where the wood draws near to peep at itself, because it is so fine and big all at once, growing on the top of a huge rock. Here you take to the wood. It is irresistible at this point.

It is more satisfactory and wetting to stay at the ford. Kex are handy for making water mills, and the brook has more go and vim just at this spot, as the hemlock mill arms testify. I always thought of the sheep- wash, when we sang in school :

"Where the pools are bright and deep,
Where the grey trout lies asleep,
Up the river and over the lea,
That's the way for Billy and me."

Hogg must have had a lane in his life almost as fine as Ludlam's lane.

There was once an unselfish man who loved a lass with his whole heart, and mind, and soul. His joy in her was such that, in his unselfishness, he thought to pass on his happiness to his fellow men, by making known to them the unparalleled beauties of the maiden he loved. He did his best in the choicest words of his vocabulary, but only succeeded in sending his auditors to sleep. The highest compliment of the chief of the band,—a worshipper at the shrine of Somnus—could find, was: "She's a fine soporific, is your lass. Long life to you both."

The unselfish man gave it up. And even so must I with my lane.

A SIGN

IT was the only thing he had to assure him that he had not dreamed, this long paper with both their names upon it. It was the only time to his knowledge that those names had been, or would be, coupled: there they were in her handwriting, and he knew—so little, yet so much—that it had not been a dream.

It was the day that had brought it back to him, a day early in May, on which all the pent showers of a fine April condensed together, and the rain ceased not, nor abated for a single moment, its dismal monotone punctuated at intervals by a spattering splash on the flooded courtyard from the overflowing eaves; and now, it seemed to him the tears of things; then, the wine of life spilled by a careless hand.

On such a day twenty years before, he had been summoned by an urgent message to one of the big hotels of the town. A man, a visitor, always ailing, lay in sudden indescribable agony, despairing of relief.

As he came down the wide corridor, having left his patient eased, a woman appeared in the open doorway of a room and asked him to enter. Her face was passionless as that of some Mother of Sorrows, whose heart is still, being dead; and as the dead may look at the living she looked at him and said, in relief, simply: "You have a happiness beyond the earthly," and she thanked him.

Knowing what he knew, he quailed as the living quail before the dead. "There are times of impotence when we sound the abyss," he said.

They were both young, and she was beautiful, and because they had struck instantly the deep of things, they spoke one to the other as though they never had not known and reverenced each other; yet the subject of their speaking was only her husband's illness and way of life. And as he looked and heard, he was the more amazed at what lay there before him as an open book might lie to which the key is in an unknown tongue. And at the end, lifting her eyes, she saw the look.

"I thought," she said. "I thought that I—that happiness might cure him," and all her lovely face was dyed a crimson shame since she had failed so utterly.

His practised eye had seen more than she hid. He gauged the sacred folly of her hope, the live death of that past tense, and he was silent.

It came to pass that as he covered with quick strides the rain-splashed street, he knew for the first time what the fierce grip of love can be—iron fingers molten where they meet.

She had said that she would send, and this she did less than a fortnight later, and because he did not see her, he wanted her the more.

A month passed and he looked for her incessantly, but their ways diverged.

Then again a message came, and thinking it might be the end, he went without delay.

She sat at a far window rigid with horror at so much pain. But life is tragically strong, and will not lightly fail even those who scorn its noblest powers.

His task achieved, he came to her, and when at length she looked and saw his stern drawn face, with a little cry she rose from her chair and motioned him to sit in it; but he drew up another, and still stood.

"Rest a little before you go," she said.

He had grown used to death and pain, and thoughts of them had come, through use, to hold him lightly. He had tried in his young day to solve the mystery of their existence. Now he only fought them. But some of the commonest things of life had passed him by. This was their hour. They came a welling, reckless flood, and though he served in an austere school, he hardly stemmed the tide.

She rose, swayed suddenly, and let him put her in her chair, her cheeks the whiter for a flying tint that rose in them.

"As we look back only the heights stand out and catch the sun. Our meeting will be one of these—for me," she added, seeing his strange look.

"If you believe in giants you will meet them," he said harshly. He tottered on her pedestal.

With a quick pity she reached out her hand: "You are tired"—she stopped, for there was that in him which stayed her.

He took her hand and held it, and stood before her still and silent as the grave; and swift and strong there passed from him to her the wordless truth.

At the open window the wind blew cold and sweet through rain.

"Your life—is to be made." It seemed that she entreated, and her voice sank suddenly.

So they parted.

That day and the one which followed he lived numb save when he neared her house. Then, as savage beasts, with something noble in them which they comprehend not, have ranged the cells of holy men, ravening and near, yet have not touched, he stood desiring at her gate, and passed.

On the third day he entered straight, and asked if she were well.

The sick man was better. They had left that morning, he was told.

After a hard day, tired and spiritless he stumbled across the threshold of his door. An envelope with his name upon it lay on the table in the brightly-lighted hall. He opened it as one who must, and found the paper he now held—a blank cheque.

Twenty years! And as he went about the world and saw men striving against hopeless odds, a rush of poignant memories would claim, in argument that would not be gainsaid, quenchless worship of the heart for her and them and the dim Worker in "red earth."

CONSTANCE BIDDLE

OTHELLO

BETTY slowly closed a volume of Shakesperian tragedies; curled herself up on the hearthrug before a glowing fire, and with a sigh of contentment, asked her uncle for a cigarette.

At last she broke the silence by saying, "Poor Desdemona! it's dreadful to think anyone free from guilt should come to end her life so tragically; but I think she must have been a bit shallow-minded not to see the risk she ran in pleading persistently and ardently for Cassio. Besides, she seems to have been rather weak-minded when she had anything to do with the opposite sex."

"Well, Betty," rejoined her uncle, "the fact that she had the courage to address her father, before the Duke and the others, in these words, should prove to you she was far from being either shallow or weak minded. Just listen to this now:—

"My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty:
To you I am bound for life and education;
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you; you are the lord of duty;
I am hitherto your daughter: but here's my husband;
And so much duty as my mother show'd
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor my lord." *Act I, Scene 3.*

"Yes," replied Betty, "that's just why I can't be quite sure she was a ninny after all."

"What you can't understand is, how any girl sufficiently intelligent to carry out her plans of elopement without arousing her father's suspicions, can have been so blind not to understand she ran a risk of creating jealousy in the mind of her husband when she pleaded for Cassio's return to favour."

"That's exactly what I do mean."

"You must understand, then, Desdemona had very little experience of the rough ways of life. Her time was occupied most likely reading romances, needlework, practising the lute, and an occasional stroll, always accompanied by a guard of some kind.

"She would not realise the risks she ran as she planned her elopement. It was probably an experience a trifle more thrilling than she could create from any books. Perhaps life was dull and her soul craved to break the chain of monotony. Her father says of her,

> "A maiden never bold;
> Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
> Blush'd at herself." *Act I, Scene 3.*

This shows she was of a timid disposition; now, as a matter of fact, shy people invariably have, on rare occasions, greater courage and daring than those reputed audacious.

"What you consider to be shallowness in Desdemona was the result of her bringing up, and a limited experience of the world. She was so pure minded herself that she failed to understand others could be less so under any conditions; and as for the poison of jealousy ever entering the mind of her husband, was so beyond her thoughts that she could not comprehend there was danger in persistently pleading for Cassio.

"Such people," continued Betty Raynham's uncle, "are greatly to be pitied, for they suffer for the sins of others, while they are in no way to blame themselves."

"I think, then," retorted Betty, with indignation, "Emilia must have been a horrid old cat not to have imparted to her mistress a little more knowledge of the ways of the wicked world. Of course," she continued, "I know Emilia was her maid, but even maids have ways of letting their mistresses know things, especially when they spend so much time together as these two did."

"Now, in Emilia you have, I think, a truly shallow character. Indirectly, she tried to awaken her mistress's mind as to the possibility of the Moor's anger being caused by jealousy. Instead of speaking out plainly, she was content to let matters take their own course; though her more extensive experience of men should have told her to shield her mistress. Emilia's apparent indifference to the fate of Desdemona was caused, perhaps, through fear of her own husband, but, as she had not the courage to deliberately steal

the handkerchief for Iago, you will see she was loyal neither to Desdemona or Iago."

" You always say, and I must confess I agree with you," remarked the girl on the hearthrug, " curiosity is more keenly developed in women than men, yet with all her greater knowledge of affairs and an insight into her husband's ways, it seems strange that Emilia should show so little interest in Iago's reason for wishing to possess the particular handkerchief."

" Well, you silly kid, doesn't that prove her empty-headedness? She troubled not at all about Desdemona or the handkerchief, all she cared about was living in peace and comfort herself. It was no concern of hers to meddle in other people's affairs, and so long as she was in no way blamed for anything, she gave little thought as to the fate of others."

" But," queried Betty, " she spoke out boldly enough in the last act when she disclosed the cowardly schemes of Iago; and I don't think she appeared shallow minded on that occasion?"

" Under a great shock or surprise," explained the uncle, " even the most stupid people will sometimes become eloquent and apparently bold. Her grief at the loss of Desdemona was probably genuine, but as with most weak-minded and indifferent dispositions, she lashed the grieving Othello with cruel scorn, boldly denounced her own husband when she knew he was already a condemned man."

" Oh, dear! Yo do make Emilia a vile wretch."

" No, Betty. She was too stupid to be classed as wholly that. If the silly woman had given a few more moments thought as to the danger of Othello's change towards her young and ignorant mistress, she would have behaved differently towards Othello, Desdemona and Iago."

" Goody!" Betty exclaimed, with a merry twinkle in her brown eyes, " I hope you don't classify me with the Emilias. What would you say if I married an Iago and developed a vacillating turn of mind like hers?"

" Under the influence of a keener and stronger will it is never safe to prophesy how a character will turn out, but I think your insight into personality, and your love of clean and frank behaviour, would scarcely suit a cur like Iago."

" Perhaps, then, you think it would be more probable for me to fall in love with a beautiful swarthy creature like Othello? How romantic," continued the niece, " to be strangled, or smothered, by my lord, because I happened to speak coaxingly to him about some counter jumper who had been put down because he happened to get fuddled on our wedding day."

" How the dickens do you get such fantastic ideas into your head?" laughed the uncle. " But I do believe you would be much more likely to fall in love with an Othello type of mind than with any of the other characters in the play."

" Oh, glory, uncle ! Hurry up and let me hear why you think I should glue my eye on a man like Othello," replied Betty, as she accepted her second cigarette.

" Well, Kid, I have invariably noticed a strong character, one that is frank and even with a trace of passion, attracts your attention and admiration. You are not so easily captivated by good looks and charming manners as most girls of your age. Othello was naturally pure minded ; a man who would not yield to temptation, and who killed his wife not from jealousy, but because he could not bear the idea of her living in sin. He never showed signs of moral weakness ; it was intellectual blindness that drove him in the wrong direction. It is just this strong personality that convinces me you would love an Othello.

" As with Desdemona, Othello's purity of soul was born in him, and had not arisen from remorse. There are people born with sound physical and moral health, whose surroundings are conducive to encouraging such qualities; they do not necessarily fail to recognise corruption in others, and they are careful to keep aloof because they recognise the curse and mischief of wrong deeds, and enjoy the power they wield over others ; but it is this very egotism that makes them easy victims to a knave like Iago. Such natures stand very much in the relation of a man who tastes alcohol for the first time.

" Othello had no intimacy with women until he met Desdemona, and what appeared to him as proof of her immorality had the effect of intoxicants on a constitution unaccustomed to anything of the kind."

" It's a bit difficult to believe that a man trained to affairs of state should so suddenly lose command of his reason," responded Betty.

" You must not forget Othello had been undergoing an unusual strain of change and excitement, and the very fact that he fell into a trance shows his brain was in an unhealthy condition.

" Undoubtedly, too, he was a genius, and the only difference between a genius and an idiot is that the first over the last is mentally abnormal on the favourable side. Both kinds of people are frequently rational up to a certain point, but when their vulnerable mental spot is touched, it's generally all up with them. This is exactly what Iago did so effectually, because, having no sense of pity and a thorough contempt for virtue, he found the Moor an easy instrument on which to amuse himself. The recollection of Brabantio's warning, when he said :—

> Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see :
> She has deceived her father, and may thee. *Act I*, *Scene 3*,

would, in itself, be quite sufficient to stimulate Othello's suspicion, and would not require a vast amount of further proofs from other quarters.

It is only natural to experience great compassion for the innocent Desdemona, but I think we actually pity Othello even more. Of course, for a long time he was buoyed up by anger and jealousy, for no one in his right senses would have said :—

> "Ay, let her rot, and perish, and be damned to-night ; for she shall not live : no, my heart is turned to stone ; I strike it, and it hurts my hand. O, the world hath not a sweeter creature : she might lie by an emperor's side and command him. *Act IV, Scene 1.*

Compare this against his last words, which show his return of sanity, revealing his powerful command of himself, together with a return of his high love of justice :—

> " Soft you ; a word or two, before you go,
> I have done the state some service, and they know't ;—
> No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,
> When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
> Speak of me as I am ; nothing extenuate,
> Nor set down aught in malice : then must you speak
> Of one that loved, not wisely, but too well ;
> Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,
> Perplex'd in the extreme ; of one whose hand,
> Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
> Richer than all his tribe ; of one whose subdued eyes,
> Albeit unusèd to the melting mood,
> Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
> Their medicinal gum. Set you down this ;
> And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
> Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk
> Beat a Venetian, and traduced the state,
> I took by the throat the circumcisèd dog,
> And smote him,—thus." (Othello here stabs himself).
> *Act V, Scene 3.*

Betty's eyes were now wet with tears, but at length she broke the silence and said : " Thank goodness a man like Iago would stand no chance these days of carrying out his vile plots ; but I suppose, even now, there are unscrupulous beings who would ruin people just for the pleasure of showing contempt for any sense of morality."

" There are not only men of this kind in every community, but in spite of the supposed modern intellectualism and knowledge of the world, they are as successful as Iago in ruining the lives of those with whom they come in contact."

" Oh, come, uncle ! You are just a bit too down on the present generation. Of course you are an old dear, and all the blessed lot of us

nephews and neices wouldn't have you any different for anything; but I'm afraid you get a bit impossible at times. Why," continued the young girl, "if Iago lived in these days, he'd have a whole shoal of Sherlock Holmes's and newspaper reporters after him."

"You silly girl," her uncle laughingly rejoined, "you're taking me altogether too literally. What I mean is this: there are men who take a pride in scorning a sense of feeling and justice. They discover there is a fascination in cheating and deceiving their neighbours. The material advantage that may accrue does not, I think, occupy so much of their thought as is usually supposed. The excitement of avoiding failure, and in upsetting the good others are trying to work, lends the chief zest to their nefarious work.

"As Othello's mind was naturally pure and healthy, so was Iago's the opposite. While the Moor's faculties had grown along the lines of a high sense of duty and the desire to be great, Iago became keen and subtle through devilment; for dishonesty and roguery is a school in which one is sure to acquire a certain shrewdness and knowledge of men. Of course, it's the vilest way of gaining intelligence, and as you are sensible to know it always ends in disaster, I've no need to warn you against adopting such short cuts to experience of the world.

"Take a glance at this Devil. You can't call Iago anything milder. In a rough way he could adapt himself to most people. He ruled his wife by contempt; Roderigo with sneers and challenges to deeds of boldness; he bent Cassio with feigned sympathy for his misfortune, and had Othello under his thumb by touching his weak spot, which was the new found and pure love for one of the opposite sex.

"Iago knew his own capabilities sufficiently to see he could not successfully play the part of a refined and delicately mannered gentleman, and that, perhaps, was his reason for not attempting to contaminate the aristocratic Desdemona. It appears, in fact, that he distrusted his powers of deceiving women, because you will remember he did not have sufficient control over his wife to trust her with his reason for wanting her mistress's handkerchief. Does it not strike you as remarkable that it was a woman who betrayed him?"

"Well, that's one score off the men for our sex, isn't it, uncle?"

"I must confess," went on Betty's uncle, "I have a tinge of admiration for such daring villians; because, although Iago used other people as his instruments, he was sufficiently wide awake to know that he ran a considerable risk himself. This is evident when he says:—

> "This is the night
> That either makes me or fordoes me quite."

Act V, Scene 1.

"I suppose it sounds rather a paradox to say that there are people who are true to their dishonesty; but they play their wicked games with a cunning boldness and prefer to die rogues than snivelling penitents.

"Iago is a type of man who finds an honest life dull and without savour; it is as impossible for such men to live good lives as to develope the strength of a Goliath within a single night."

"Oh, uncle, I begin to feel quite frightened lest I should fall into the hands of such a vile character."

"Not much likelihood of that happening. You are not easily captivated by flattery and ingratiating manners, and these are usually their chief methods of drawing their victims into their nets. Of course, I don't suppose you will walk through life without being fooled and duped by someone:—nobody ever does, and what's more, it wouldn't be good for 'em. They would be unendurably self-satisfied; in fact, they would scarcely be human beings."

"Why, uncle, I do believe you admire Iago after all?"

"You're quite wrong then, but for all their villainy they are generally the fool's best teachers. If anything will make people realise themselves, it is a sharp stinging experience that will bring them to their senses and show them in what degree they are superior or the reverse to their surroundings."

Betty stretched her long legs, glanced at the clock and said she must be off to bed.

"Well, good-night, Kid," said her uncle, "don't dream that either Othello or Iago are making love to you."

Norman Buss

CHARLOTTE BRONTË AND WAR

THE birth date of that wonderful artist who came into the world exactly a hundred years ago, to create a new literary tradition and set the gossips mouthing down the century, strikes upon us now with a special and not altogether an extraneous meaning. Not so far-off sound the echoes of those old, unhappy things that ravaged Europe immediately before April, 1816; and we recall with something more than academic interest that Charlotte Brontë "worshipped" the Duke of Wellington. The word that Mary Taylor used is not extravagant. A terrific capacity for adoration burned within the "trembling little frame" that Thackeray described—nor in this connection can we forget how much he owed to it. Him, too, she called

" master " : and conceivably it was this passion in her, rather than love in the usual sense, that drew her to that other master, the man whose remarkable personality fascinated a mind keenly susceptible to character. That she was conscious of this capacity in herself is evidenced by the fact that the sentiment which Jane Eyre applies to Rochester—" I could not, in those days, see God for his creature, of whom I had made an idol," had already been expressed by Charlotte Brontë to her first school friend : " Surely, Ellen, we are in danger of loving each other too well—of losing sight of the Creator in idolatry of the creature."

The idolatry of the Duke—" par excellence *the* Duke "—began almost from the cradle. A wooden image of him took the place of the ordinary doll. " Papa bought Bramwell some wooden soldiers at Leeds," she writes in the childish diary, " Emily and I jumped out of bed, and I snatched up one and exclaimed, ' This is the Duke of Wellington—this shall be the Duke ! ' ... ..Mine was the prettiest of the whole, and the tallest, and the most perfect in every part."

Round the kitchen fire was formed the Play of the Islanders. Eleven year old Charlotte conceives the brilliant idea. " We then chose who should be chief men in our islands. I chose the Duke of Wellington and his two sons."

When she went to school she defended her hero against Mary Taylor, who belonged to the " furious Radical party "—and whom she informed that she had taken an interest in politics ever since she was five !

The precocious little family in the Haworth Parsonage, cut off from normal childish interests, perhaps by inclination as well as circumstance, enthusiastically responded to the father's practice of discussing his political views with them. Naturally the violent bias of the Tory parson was freely shared ! At thirteen, Charlotte gravely records—" We take the *Leeds Intelligencer*, a most excellent Tory newspaper. We see the *John Bull* ; it is a high Tory, very violent......likewise *Blackwood's Magazine*, the most able periodical there is."

The influence of such an atmosphere on a mind at once plastic and tenacious was too great for eradication. Charlotte Brontë, in some respects, never outgrew the narrow and exclusive dogmas of the parsonage. There was never, surely, a more striking combination in one personality of conservative prejudice, with bold—even revolutionary—thought. In art and some phases of life, Charlotte Brontë struck a pioneer note : her imagination and her courage went matched in a mighty leap ahead of her time ; she dropped " a live coal among the log-rollers " and flung challenge after challenge to traditional conceptions of woman's " sphere " ; undoubtedly she had an original and penetrating mind, an eager love of truth, a mordant

humour that rent aside much cant and insincerity ; yet withal she retained, in a sort of incongruous and disconcerting docility, the fetters of a cramped environment and a limited knowledge of life.

Naturally, the cruder forms of partisanship gave way, in some degree, to adult experience. Association with the Taylors, "furious Radicals" that they were, first modified her inherited hostilities. And long before she came to balance views with artistic nicety in "Shirley," she had discovered that the world wagged in more ways than two.

It is, of course, in "Shirley" that we find her handling war, though indirectly and through the medium of character. This unique book, that has suffered unaccountable neglect beside the more popular companions of an imperishable trinity, has charms that more than counterbalance the lack of perfect cohesion. It is saturated throughout with the peculiar quality of the author—an individual essence difficult to define, for it does not reside in style alone though expressed through it. The Brontë manner, racy, piquant, vibrant with feeling, delicate, glowing and sardonic by turns, is here exhibited in a brilliant series of portraits, scenes and dialogues. Apart from all else, "Shirley" gives us an interesting glimpse of England—or at least, Yorkshire—under war conditions a century ago. Primarily, the story is concerned with the Luddite riots ; but in much of the action and comment we see not only the effect of the European strife on manufacturers and workpeople, but a curious likeness between some features of the time and those of to-day.

Conflicting aspects reveal themselves in the conversation of the three cleverly contrasted characters, at once strikingly individual and typical of more than their period—Yorke, the uncompromising democrat; Robert Moore, hard-headed man of business ; and Helstone, "the Cossack," who "had missed his vocation ; he should have been a soldier, and circumstances had made him a priest." It is this implacable cleric whom Moore likes to infuriate ; and, as they ride together in the trail of the frame-breakers, Moore "began to goad him." A fiery interchange follows, ending with—"I can think what I please, Mr. Helstone, both about France and England ; and about revolutions, and regicides, and restorations in general ; and about the divine rights of kings, which you often stickle for in your sermons ; and the duty of non-resistance, and the sanity of war——."

Between Helstone and Yorke there is still deeper antipathy. "The freethinker hated the formalist; the lover of liberty detested the disciplinarian." And their wordy encounters break up in irreconcilable discord.

While the men are directly interested in the course of the war, the women are concerned chiefly with its effects on the men. Caroline is absorbed in the fate of Moore ; even Shirley, the larger-brained, great hearted, brilliant Shirley, seems to view the matter from the angle of her tenant's

interests. It is true she expresses some independent opinions to Joe Scott, and her enthusiasm for Wellington is manifested in a delightful passage ; while she almost quarrels with Yorke in her stand against his doctrinaire pronouncements. Military ardour she certainly displays on one or two occasions, but it seems to be the result of high spirit rather than any desire after the "baleful and glorious laurel." She bears Caroline away on a wave of excitement to the scene of the attack on Hollow's Mill ; both girls watch in fascinated horror the rage of armed conflict, knowing—"the fighting animal was roused in every one of those men there struggling together, and for the time quite paramount above the rational human being." When it was all over, the "mill yawned ruinous," and "wounded men writhed and moaned in the bloody dust. Miss Keeldar's countenance changed at this view ; it was the after-taste of the battle, death and pain replacing excitement and exertion. 'This is what I wished to prevent,' she said, in a voice whose cadence betrayed the altered impulse of her heart."

It is interesting to speculate on the light in which the author of "Villette" would have regarded the Belgians of to-day. Her strong antipathies, as evidenced in the novel and in her letters, are largely a blend of insular bias with a Protestantism which she inherited, together with an Irish accent, from her Ulster parent. On the other hand, her narrow prejudices could always be combated by her innate sense of justice, her passionate love of freedom, her respect for conscience, and in any clear case of the infringement of these rights, the issue—of her sympathies—could hardly have been in doubt. Her account of Brussels, as it appeared to her over sixty years ago, makes its own appeal, and a special significance attaches to her description of the great city fete.

It is by no means a simple task to disentangle either a sustained or developed attitude in Charlotte Brontë on the question of war. But it is sufficiently easy to make deductions, both from her method of dealing with it as artistic material, and the known tendencies of her richly individual character. That her faculty for hero-worship spent itself in childhood on warrior figures—that the literary precocity which she shared with her sisters found expression in romances of battle—proves little as a serious indication of taste. It is not to be supposed, because the "Gondal Chronicles" and "Islander Tales" dealt with military exploits, that the Brontës were necessarily martial in spirit and lovers of warfare. Certainly one need not go as far as a recent reputable critic, who claimed for Emily Brontë a kind of prophetic anti-Teutonism on the strength of verse dealing with imaginary campaigns. One might, with as much reason, find modern pro-German championship in Charlotte's comment in 1848—"With the French and Irish I have no sympathy; with the Germans and Italians I think the case is different—as different as the love of freedom is from the lust of license." Or Slavophobia in another remark, made in 1854—"Of course, my father's

sympathies (and mine, too) are all with Justice and Europe against Tyranny and Russia."

There emerges clear the fact that Charlotte Brontë, " that outspeaker and champion of truth, that eager redresser of wrong," was by no means lacking in support of armed crusade against the oppressors of humanity. But it was the cause, rather than the means, that appealed to her ardent soul. She travelled from the early delight of melodramatising battle scenes to a recoil from actual carnage. More and more acutely she grew to realise the meaning of war, to perceive its cruelty and desolating effects ; and a larger sense of the values of life than had yet stirred her maturing brain—struck numb, alas! too soon—inspired her to write this striking commentary in a letter to a friend :—

" I remember well wishing my lot had been cast in the troubled times of the late war, and seeing in its exciting incidents a kind of stimulating charm which it made my pulse beat fast only to think of. I remember even, I think, being a little impatient that you would not fully sympathise with my feelings on this subject, that you heard my aspirations and speculations very tranquilly, and by no means seemed to think the flaming sword could be any pleasant addition to the joys of paradise. I have now outlived youth ; and though I dare not say that I have outlived all its illusions, that the romance is quite gone from life, the veil fallen from truth, and that I see both in naked reality, yet, certainly, many things are not to me what they were ten years ago ; and amongst the rest, " the pomp and circumstance of war " have quite lost in my eyes their factitious glitter. I have still no doubt that the shock of moral earthquakes wakens a vivid sense of life, both in nations and individuals ; that the fear of dangers on a broad national scale diverts men's minds momentarily from brooding over small private perils and, for the time, gives them something like largeness of views ; but as little doubt have I that convulsive revolutions put back the world in all that is good, checks civilisation, bring the dregs of society to its service—in short, it appears to me that insurrections and battles are the acute diseases of nations, and that their tendency is to exhaust by their violence the vital energies of the countries where they occur."

LILY TOBIAS

W. H. HUDSON
AN APPRECIATION

FROM very early times there have been writers who have recorded their observations on wild life. In all the ages the poets have drawn freely upon untamed nature, some with sublime success. The prose writers have not, until recently, been so fortunate, and among the mountain of books that have been published, how few prose works there are, dealing with nature as distinct from human interest, that have obtained lasting or even financial success! It is doubtful whether among older readers, a tithe have read the "Natural History of Selborne."

In one of his earlier books, "Birds and Man," Mr. W. H. Hudson suggests a reason. He is describing an imaginary interview with the shade of Gilbert White, at Selborne, in which he points out to the older naturalist "the marked difference in manner, perhaps in feeling, between the old and new writers on animal life and nature"; the disposition, almost amounting to a passion, of the modern mind to view life and nature in their æsthetic aspects; and further the emotionalism of the moderns as compared with the writers of the past. Whatever the cause, there is an ever widening interest in outdoor life. "Nature books" are published in greater number than ever before. A pleasing feature of the popular magazines is the regular supply of natural history literature, and this presumes a demand. Perhaps this widening interest may partly be attributed to the considerable attention devoted to nature study in the schools; partly owing to the greater facilities to-day for observation. But the more sympathetic spirit of the modern writer on outdoor life is a feature that cannot be ignored in seeking an explanation of the change in popular taste.

Unfortunately for the literature of the wild, those in the best position for observation are of the unlettered, one might almost add, inarticulate classes. Hodge is not a naturalist, nor an artist. Shepherds, ploughmen, carters, have seldom anything to tell us about the habits of birds or beasts. The eyes of the labourer are kept so closely to the soil in an effort to eke out a livelihood, that he is unable to see the life of the open air in its widest beauty. He regards wild fauna only as a possible addition to his scanty larder.

The popular writer on outdoor life is usually a townsman who has thrown off the shackles of town life, and this fact may account for a pronounced tendency to-day, to endow everything, even inanimate things, with a personality. With Mr. Hardy, for instance, it is a great heathland; with Mr. Philpotts, the great moorland; with Mr. Algernon Blackwood, such inanimate things as snow, trees, sand or even an estate. With the realistic

school of Americans, Stewart White, Charles Roberts, Jack London and others, it is an endeavour to give distinct personality to their animal creations. These writers show considerable skill, and they have deservedly created a following who delight in their efforts. The true naturalist, however, may be inclined to regard this new development with a certain amount of suspicion, for in much of their work the writers in question appear to have always the thought of the " story " uppermost in their minds. It is too often found that in their wild life studies they have simply given human drama in animal settings. It is fortunate for nature lovers that one of the most gifted naturalists of to-day, who is a consummate master of the English language, has steered a course between the coldness of the older writers, and the too human treatment of the American school. That Mr. Hudson possesses a richly endowed imagination, no one who has read the glowing pages of " The Purple Land " can doubt ; yet, in his portrayal of wild life, he never allows it to get the better of him.

Between Mr. Hudson and wild nature, the bond of sympathy exists in a remarkable degree, most especially as regards birds. To him, more than to any writer, has been vouchsafed the gift of portraying feathered creation. To him, the love of birds is a passion. He tells us that from his earliest days his chief pleasure has been in them ; he delights in their voices above all sounds. He speaks of them even as " Relations with knowing emotional and thinking " brains like ours in their heads, and with senses like ours, only brighter. " Their beauty and grace so much beyond ours, and their faculty of flight " which enables them to return to us each year from such remote, outlandish " places, their winged swift souls in winged bodies do not make them " uncanny, but only fairy like." He has further said that his old desire was to pursue birds over many lands, " to follow knowledge like a sinking star, " until I became a name for always wandering with a hungry heart."

In a greater or lesser degree his wish has been granted, and his books reveal the record of his wanderings. The earlier ones deal with the land of his birth, South America, " A Naturalist in La Plata," " South American Sketches " and a notable novel, " The Purple Land," full of the scenic splendour and passion of the South. Eventually he came to this country and with one or two exceptions his subsequent work has dealt principally with the United Kingdom. Mr. Hudson is not merely a bird man. He enters freely into the life around him. In " A Shepherd's Life " he depicts with an accurate brush and rich humanity the influences that mould the humbler denizens of the Wiltshire Downs. In " Nature in Downland " he is equally successful in dealing with the Sussex peasant. " The Lands End " is a singularly honest and penetrating analysis of the people as well as the flora and fauna of that entrancing district. In all his work there is a judicious mixing of styles. He passes easily from grave to gay ; from the stately to the colloquial. For stately eloquence, the following description of Wells can hardly be equalled :—

"The hills, beautiful with trees and grass and flowers, come down "to it; cattle graze on their slopes; the peewit has its nest in their "stony places and the kestrel, with quick beating wings, hangs motionless "overhead. Nature is round it, breathing upon it, and touching it "caressingly on every side; flowing through it like the waters that gave "it its name in olden days, that still gush with noise and foam from the "everlasting rock, tc send their crystal currents along the streets. And "with nature, in and around the rustic-like city, live the birds. The "green woodpecker laughs aloud from the group of old cedars and pines, "hard by the cathedral close—you will not hear that woodland sound in "any other city in the kingdom; and the rooks caw all day from the "rookery in the old elms that grow at the side of the palace moat. But "the Cathedral daws, on account of their numbers, are the most "important of the feathered inhabitants of Wells. The city birds are "familiarly called 'Bishop's Jacks,' to distinguish them from the 'Ebor "Jacks,' the daws, that in large numbers, have their home and breeding "place in the neighbouring cliffs called the Ebor Rocks."

Lovers of England are particularly recommended to read Mr. Hudson's chapters on Wells. His words are worthy of the unique old Somersetshire city, most charming and beautiful of our inland towns. It is one of the few capable of drawing Mr. Hudson's affection, for he is essentially a child of the wild. The charms of civilization are small to him as compared with those of the outdoor. He expresses this sentiment in "Nature in Townland":—

"Music is inexpressibly delightful, but when I am with, or very near "to, or fresh from nature, I am cold to it; and when listening I am in a "curious way more than fastidious. That which is wholly satisfying to "the trained followers and professors, who live and move and have their "beings in a perpetual concord of sweet sounds; that which they regard "as perfection and the best expression of all that is best in man, is not a "great thing to me. Even when it most enchants me, if it does not "wholly swamp my intellect, I have a sense of something abnormal in "it, or at all events, of something wholly out of proportion to and out of "harmony with things as they exist. That music comes to us naturally, "that it is an instinct, nobody will deny; it is only music as an art and "an end in itself, cultivated in the highest degree for its own sake alone, "and taken out of its relation with life, that I am compelled to regard as "a mere bye product of the mind, a beautiful excrescence, which is of no "importance to the race, and without which most of us are just as rich "and happy in our own lives."

This is, undoubtedly, a hard saying, yet it is one to make us ponder when we think of the artificiality which has grown up around the most delightful of arts. For Mr. Hudson shows in all his writings that he is keenly

sensitive to sound, and responsive to it. His descriptions of bird music are unsurpassed in our literature. In another passage in "Nature in Downland," he says :—

"Music in another wider sense is like beauty, everywhere the
"elemental music of winds, and of waters, of :—
" The lisp of leaves and the ripple of rain,
"and the music of bird voices. For just as the bird, as Ruskin says, is
"the cloud concentrated, its aerial form perfected and vivified with life ;
"so, too, in the songs and calls and cries of the winged people do we
"listen to the diffused elemental music of nature concentrated and
"changed to clear, penetrative sound. Listen to the concealed reed
"warbler, quietly singing all day long to himself among the reeds and
"rushes ; it is a series of liquid sounds, the gurgling and chipping of
"lapping water on the shallow pebble bed of a stream. The beautiful
"inflected cry of the playing peewit is a mysterious lonely sound, as of
"some wild half-human being blowing in a hollow reed he had made.
"Listen again to a band of small shore birds,—stints, dotterels, knots
"and dunlins—conversing together as they run about on the level sands,
"or dropping bright twittering notes as they fly swiftly past ; it is like
"the vibrating crystal sounds of a handful of pebbles thrown upon and
"bounding and glissading musically over a wide sheet of ice.

"From these small sounds and the smaller still of insect life, to the
"greater sounds of bird and mammal—the noise of the herring and
"black-backed gulls drifting leisurely by at a vast height above the
"earth, and ever and anon bursting out in a great chorus of laugh-like
"cries, as if the clouds had laughed ; the innumerable bleatings of a
"driven flock ; the percussive bark of the shepherd's dog, and the lowing
"of kine in some far-off valley. They are all musical and are in a sense
"music."

Everyone must be familiar with some instance where certain sounds, generally regarded as raucous, become beautiful through a favourable setting. It is in regard to setting that the composer of music is largely handicapped. Mr. Hudson, commenting on Cowper's dictum that "All the sounds that nature utters are delightful, at least, in this country," refers to the poet's one exception, the bleating of an ass.

"The braying of a donkey was, to Cowper, the one exception in
"animal life ; but he never heard it in its proper conditions. I have
"often listened to it, and have been deeply impressed, in a wild silent
"country, in a place where semi-wild asses roamed over the plains ; and
"the sound, at a distance, had a wild expression that accorded with the
"scene, and owing to its much greater power, affected the mind more
"than the trumpeting of wild swans, and the shrill neighing of wild
"horses, and other far reaching cries of wild animals."

Adverting to the question of concert room music, it is the handicap of the composer that his music is seldom heard under proper conditions. The ugly hall; the well-fed, talkative, commonplace audience; the ill lighting; all combine against him. In the concert room the other senses only too frequently combine against the sense of hearing by distracting attention. Nature, on the contrary, gives her performers a perfect setting. Her resources are greater, and in her case the senses aid instead of divert attention.

Of one in such close communion with nature as Mr. Hudson, it is needless to say he regards with disgust any attempt at keeping wild birds in captivity. The story of his one and only cage bird is a touching one. When it eventually escaped he grieved for a time at the loss of a loved pet, but he never repeated the experiment. His passion is always aroused by that most degrading sight, a lark in captivity. Yet he has no false ideas regarding birds themselves. His eyes are fully open to their cruelty, and the constant preying of the strong upon the weak. He glories in the prowess of the birds of prey. The hawk in striking a pipit is only fulfilling its destiny. The life of the small field bird, even if exposed to the dangers of the birds of prey and of starvation, is better than a well fed captivity in perfect safety and luxury.

Any account of Mr. Hudson's work would be incomplete without some reference to his splendid descriptive power, fortified by incidents, for the most part, of personal observation. The ways of birds are visualised with exceptional lucidity. The homely ways of the sheldrake are brought intimately into view. The marital relations of the sand martins are described in convincing terms. The lordly motions of the hawk and the eagle are brought into our vision by means of lordly language. And wherever suitable, the note of pathos is sparingly sounded. In conclusion, the following account of an experience of Mr. Hudson's brother may not be out of place:—

> "Immense numbers of upland geese in great flocks used to spend the "cold months on the plains where he had his lonely hut; and one "morning in August in the early spring of that Southern country, some "days after all the flocks had taken their departure to the South, he was "out riding, and saw at a distance before him a pair of geese. Their "movements attracted his attention and he rode to them. The female "was walking steadily on in a southerly direction, while the male, "greatly excited, and calling loudly from time to time, walked at a "distance ahead, and constantly turned back to see and call to his mate, "and at intervals of a few minutes he would rise up and fly, screaming, "to a distance of some hundreds of yards; then, finding that he had not "been followed, he would return and alight at a distance of forty or fifty "yards in advance of the other bird, and begin walking on as before. "The female had one wing broken, and, unable to fly, had set out on her "long journey to the Magellanic Islands on her feet; and her mate

" though called to by that mysterious imperative voice in his breast, yet " would not forsake her; but flying a little distance to show her the " way, and returning again and again, and calling her with his wildest " and most piercing cries, urged her still to spread her wings and fly with " him to their distant home."

" And in that sad anxious way they would journey on to the " inevitable end, when a pair or family of carrion eagles would spy them " from a great distance—the two travellers left behind by their fellows, " one flying, the other walking; and the first would be left to continue " the journey alone."

W. J. Ivey

THE DUCHESS'S PEARLS

THE Duchess of Bandon sat in negligée in an easy chair by her bedroom fire in her room at Lady Holroy's; and let the light of reflection flicker delicately over the events of the evening. She still wore her justly-celebrated pearls, round a neck no less perfect than the gems.

It had been her first Ball since the death of the late Duke. She had always called him the late Duke, even in his life-time, on account of his little failing. Whenever she looked at her pearls, she thought of him; but, then she did not often look at her pearls.

She was thinking of the very pleasant young American she had met at the ball that evening—for the first time, though he was also of the house-party. Her hostess had introduced them early in the evening, and they had been mutually interested ever since. Van Huyler was the name she had heard, and from her programme she knew his first name to be Cecil. Credentials he needed not; his presence at Lady Holroyd's was sufficient: moreover he was agreeable, witty, and handsome. Had she been inquisitive she could have discovered that in addition to a long line of aristocratic Dutch ancestors, he was a possessor of considerable wealth.

" Do you know" he had said to her during their fourth waltz "I have never met a real Duchess before, and am only just getting over my awe!"

" Really!" she replied; "I shall be alarmed for my safety when you are thoroughly at your ease. You Americans are not exactly—backward. Have you been in long in England?"

"Long enough to meet the most beautiful woman and the most perfect pearls I have ever seen" he said.

"Indeed!" she replied, touching the necklace; "but he was a very little Duke!"

He looked at her, and mentally pictured the contrast. "Do you know" he went on presently, "I would give the world to own—"

"Really" she interposed "you Americans—"

"Those pearls" he finished.

"Oh" she said, "I thought you meant—"

"One does not always say all one means" he said; but she thought his eyes said a good deal, and hers dropped before them.

"Does it annoy you to speak of your pearls?" he resumed.

"Not at all. True, they bring back memories not always pleasant" she said with a hard look in her eyes; "but I do not often wear them."

"Pearls have a great fascination for me" said Van Huyler "they are my hobby—my passion. I have been across continents to secure a single specimen. I believe I could almost commit crime for them!"

"You have done so already" said the Duchess; "The crime of covetousness!"

"If covetousness be a crime," he said boldly, "I am doubly a criminal."

The Duchess blushed. She hated herself for doing it. Really, these Americans! But it was rather pleasant, too—she was not sure that she altogether disliked it. It was so new; the Duke had been a frigid and rigid mortal, and his family depressing. Before her marriage she had seen little of the world, and since her widowhood had hardly mixed in society. But now she was beginning to feel that she was a human possibility; and that life held other things than carriages, furs, dukes and—pearls. Did she like the man, or only the sensation? Romance was strong in her, and a love for the unconventional. Well, this man was unconventional enough, and promised plenty of entertainment. She would let him flirt with her. It was amusing. So they had parted for the night on very excellent terms.

Now as she sat by the remains of her fire, she wondered if he were sincere, and whether his admiration had really been for the pearls only, or for the wearer as well. She stirred the fire; a blaze sprang up. In the moment of light she saw something that made her heart beat violently, and then the ever-ready blush to spread down her throat and on to her half-bare shoulders; but she did not move.

Under one of the heavy curtains that screened the large bay window, in the shade of the dressing table, she had seen two spots of light reflected from the blaze; and in an instant she knew these points to be patent leather shoes—man's shoes—and in a breath she knew them to belong to one man of all men. She stirred the coals again, and watched carefully. Yes—the shape was peculiar; she had noticed it unconsciously in the conservatory. What

should she do? She dared not make a scene—it would be so very—well, open to misconception! And yet—really, these Americans! One's very bedroom was not safe.

By-and-bye a welcome thought occurred to her. Perhaps after all it was only her pearls he wanted. Had he not said he would commit crime for the possession of them? The more she thought of this, the more she was convinced. Had he been there from any other motive, obviously he would not have waited so long.

Being now easier in her mind, she formed her plans quickly; but did not hurry to put them into execution. When the light from the fire had died down, she slowly removed her pearls from her neck, and placed them in the open case. Then she made a few re-arrangements of her toilet-table, chattering to herself in an undertone of monologue.

"Ah, mon Dieu!" she yawned ever so slightly "how tired I am! What "a detestable night, and what odious people! What a bore to have to undress "oneself—I wish I had kept Parsons—what a wretched light! Does it turn "up, I wonder? There! I've turned it out! How does it switch on? I don't "know. Oh dear! No matches to light the candles! I suppose I must go to "bed in the dark! But I must lock my precious pearls—there!"

With a click she locked the long, flat case, and presently slipped between the sheets, half dressed as she was. She feigned the gentle half audible regular breathing of sleep, and before very long heard a movement of the curtain. Through her half-closed eyes she could dimly discern a tall figure quickly snatch the precious case, and stealthily approach the door. Very gently it was opened and closed, and she was alone. After a few moments she sprang from the bed and locked the door. In her hands were the keys, and—her pearls, which she had removed from the case before locking it, in that brief moment at the table.

* * * * * * * * * *

"Good morning, Duchess."

"Oh—er—good morning, I suppose!"

"An original remark. I trust you slept well?"

"As well as could be expected."

"Nothing disturbed your slumbers, I hope?" (How well he did it, and what effrontery!)

"Nothing of importance. Have you breakfasted?"

"Oh, long ago. The fact is I was up rather early. I've had rather a nasty shock—and have been greatly disappointed."

"Really!" (Rather superciliously.)

"Yes. A great loss, I suppose, as such things go."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I have been deceived—in fact rather put upon; but I'm not going to bother you with my troubles."

He was certainly very cool about the matter—perhaps a little mad. It might be only a case of kleptomania, after all—combined with slight dementia. A sad case: she began to pity him.

"Are you going out with the guns?"

"No, they've gone some time. I stayed behind in the hope of a talk with you. Will you come for a walk?"

She would. Something—was it his daring?—compelled her towards this man, already attractive, in a sort of subtle fascination. She knew she ought to hate and despise him; she was not sure that she ought not to consult her hostess; but no real harm had been done, and it would be interesting to await developments. Anyhow she felt a pleasure in talking to him that warned her that, although a Duchess, she was still a woman, and therefore unreasonable. Perhaps, after all, there had been something behind it that she could not explain; and he was an American—and Americans are, she had always heard, peculiar.

So, instead of curtly dismissing him, here she was actually on the brink of flirtation, if not already immersed in one.

She looked into his eyes. They did not flinch! his face seemed honest; and yet she could not have made a mistake. Yes, the pearls must have been only an excuse; but in that case——It was very trying; she would talk to him in an harmless way, and perhaps she would find out.

By dinner time she had let him hold her hand. They were getting on.

On retiring, however, she kept her maid, and examined the curtains.

The next day she determined to have it out; but instead she discussed *Hamlet*, and the ways of Dukes, with him.

By the end of the week she had allowed him to call her by her first name. Evidently the novelty of the situation fascinated her. It was a new sensation; after the staid and solemn Duke, he was such a stimulant.

By the end of another week, she had let him kiss her hand unrebuked. She had of course by this time considered the possibility of marrying him. It would be so romantic to marry a man who had violated the sanctity of her bedroom in an attempt—though unsuccessful—to rob her of her beautiful pearls. It had not been for the value of the pearls—his wealth was guarantee for that; but to possess—of course—a reminiscence of her. Jealousy of the late Duke had perhaps urged him to deprive her of the association of his gift!

She really thought after all she owed it to herself to accept him if he should propose; and he was sure to do that. By now she had come to the conclusion that she had been really dreadfully compromised by the midnight visit, and that this was the only way out!

She had her reasons for appearing one night in her pearls. Her expectations were not disappointed. Van Huyler was not long in remarking upon them.

"Ah!" he said, "those pearls!"

"Again?" she queried.

"You know how I long for—"

"The pearls—yes."

"No."

"Oh!"

"They would have no value without you!"

"Really! You do not covet them for themselves?"

"But *with* you—"

"With me—?"

"I would give—"

"Tell me?"

"Everything! My life, my—"

"You are getting sentimental. All this for a string of pearls?"

"And you."

"Do I understand I am the necessary accompanying evil?"

"What do I really care for the pearls?"

"You would go across continents—"

"With you. Pearls always suggest to me—"

"In this case—the Duke?"

"—the Duke!"

"Ssh! *De mortuis*. Besides—"

"They are his gift."

"Yes. I do not want them—will you have them?"

"Not without you."

"You really want me to be—"

"Of course I do. You know that."

"Since when?"

"Since the first. Will you?"

"Perhaps. You are so very—"

"Yes?"

"Well—persistent."

"When I want anything—yes."

"And you want this?"

"Ah!"

"But you wanted the pearls first."

"Never!"

"Then why did you—"

"I didn't."

"Then it was not the pearls you came for?"

"When?"

"To my room."
"Your room?"
"Yes. After the Ball."
"Yes; behind the curtain."
"Duchess! You think I was there?"
"I am certain."
"For your pearls?"
"I hope so."
"You wrong me. I would not have insulted you by coming for your pearls."
"You took the empty case; but pearls remained."
"The shadow for the substance, indeed!"
"You see I outwitted you."
"And you think it was I?"
"You have square toes to your patent leather shoes."
"Yes."
"So it must have been you."
"I don't understand."
"No-one else has."
"No; but one other *had*."
"Indeed? Who?"
"My valet. My old ones."
"He has gone?"
"The morning after the Ball he disappeared with sundry of my belongings."
"Then it must have been he; how foolish of me!"
"How you must have despised me!"
"Not at all."
"And you could still talk to me?"
"Naturally. It was so romantic."
"But I am now acquitted?"
"Of that—yes."
"I am so glad."
"Are you?" She laughed. He came closer.
"I want you to answer my question."
She rose slowly and passed her hand across her forehead.
"Not now. I am tired—and you have disappointed me;" she said icily; "Good night, Mr. Van Huyler, and—er—goodbye. I leave to-morrow. I shall not see you again."
She swept from the room. He gazed ruefully after her.
"Confound it!" he said, why wasn't I born a valet?"

St. John Hamund

THE WAYFARER IN FICTION

THE Wayfarer is a companionable soul. He jogs on through the long hot day with a merry word and a helping hand for all and sundry, and a philosopher's eye on the changing fortunes of the road. At noonday he takes his rest in some sheltered corner with a favourite book, (one of the old school —none of your modern upstarts for him); and meditates on life with a sigh and a smile,—as befits the subject. When evening comes, behold him round the welcome fire at the inn, or in summer lounging on the seat before the door in the gathering twilight, gossiping with the village wiseacres.

Autumn is the favourite season with your true wayfarer; his equipment

"A vagrant's morning, wide and blue
In early fall, when the wind walks too.

A shadowy highway, cool and brown,
Alluring up and enticing down.

An open hand, and easy shoe
And a hope to make the day go through."

Then indeed he glories in being alive and "rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course" The village is scarce awake when he takes the road at dawn, and the morning air is crisp enough to make him step out briskly. From every copse "the smale fowles maken melodie," and he whistles cheerily in sympathy, so that he is pleasantly warm in body and soul when the labourers going to their work give him good day in passing. By eight o'clock the world is warmed up sufficiently for him to take his breakfast by the road-side. Then up and away again, along the broad white highway with its varying interests; or down some snug by-path, where the foolish rabbits dash for the wood again and the squirrel scolds from the trees.

A wet day or two does not damp the ardour of your true wayfarer. Rather, when the rain coming over the hills in waves of grey mist, blots out the valley, his spirits rise ten-fold and he steps out the more briskly for thinking of the warm fire at his journey's end. For your wayfarer is a great philosopher, and something of a humourist withal. And like Jasper Petulengro he finds life very sweet. For are there not "day and night, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon and stars, all sweet things; likewise a wind on the heath?" What though the grey-eyed mists have wrapped them in their mantles for a space? Wild roses bloom in their season, but so does the muntain ash. Oh, without doubt, life is very sweet.

Sometimes in harvest days he comes down from the hills to one of those hamlets which, lying at the foot of the wise downs, seem to have drunk of their knowledge and dreamed their dreams;

"country places
Where the old plain men have rosy faces
And the young fair maidens quiet eyes."

There he will sit on the sunny side of a shock of corn during the noon-day break to gossip with the reapers; or drink a draught at the "Cat and Custard-pot." Many a quaint opinion and many a merry tale does he give and take ere he departs. They are his stock in trade wherewith he pays for bed and board on many a night when, lacking this simple coin, he might be driven to seek the cold comfort of the stars.

Not that he is averse from the company of heaven. On the contrary, he can write you a treatise upon them with the best of your learned philosophers, and steer his course by their aid like a master mariner. But what would you? Man is a gregarious animal and the Autumn nights are cold; thus the village club, meeting in the sanded parlour of "The Barley Mow" or the "First In, Last Out" may chance to find a stranger at the hearth ready to give them "a rousing catch to make the rafters ring again."

"Drink, boys, drink and drown all your sorrow.
Drink, boys, drink, for you may be dead to-morrow.

He that drinks small beer and goes to bed sober
Falls as the leaves fall and dies in October.

He that drinks strong beer and goes to bed mellow
Lives as he ought to do and dies a merry fellow."

Yes, and one who will swallow his own advice too—a rarity in this world of ours. But do they recognise their favours, these thick-skulled rustics round the fire?—else surely, as the ashes are knocked from the pipes and the reckoning chinks in mine host's pocket they will fill up the bowl once more and drink a last toast "To Vagabonds, and long may they be with us"—for without them many a book would prove but poor reading.

Guenn F. Newnham

A VOICE IN THE NIGHT

THE night was bitterly cold and the doctor had passed a busy day. He was very tired, his sixty-odd years were bearing heavily on his shoulders as he slipped in his latch-key, opened the door and entered the silent house.

His housekeeper had long since retired to bed, but a fire smouldered sulkily on the hearth and on the table were ham, bread, butter and pickles—not an appetising meal for a tired and hungry man on a January night, but the doctor was accustomed to discomfort and there was no distaste in the look he cast upon his supper, only a fatigue greater than his hunger, a fatigue which sent him stumbling, weary and supperless, upstairs to bed, the one conscious craving of his body for cool sheets and warm blankets, the one craving of his mind that his night might be undisturbed.

"Fraser would have served his country's welfare just as well by staying on as my assistant as by rushing into khaki" thought the doctor aggrievedly, tugging with feeble violence at a soaked bootlace which refused to come untied.—"Where's my knife—I'll cut the beastly thing"—he murmured drowsily—"else I'll never stay awake long enough to get into bed."

He was fumbling with his knife when a long-sustained cry from without reached his ears. He paused, sitting motionless, a despairing expression on his weary face—he tried not to listen to that call, to shut his ears to the summons which would doubtless take him from that coveted bed out once more into the biting winter night. But clear and loud the summons was repeated—"Doctor! Hi there—Doctor."

With a peevish grunt the doctor walked to the window and opened it gingerly to the swirling wind.

"Who is it?" he asked "What do you want?"

"Its my wife—Doctor—you're wanted at once at Lone Tree Farm—" the voice rose eerily above the wailing of the wind out of the inky darkness which wrapped the world as in a pall.

"Ah, it's you, John Martin—what's up with your wife then?—" began the doctor, but there was no reply, only an icy blast of cutting wind, and with the resignation of despair he began to prepare for the journey to Lone Tree Farm; re-tied his laces, twined the muffler about his throat, buttoned up his great coat and, with a wistful look towards the stables where Polly the mare slept in a weariness as great as that of her master, took out his tricycle from its lair in the potting-shed, and set out bravely into the night.

The Martins were respectable, well-to-do people, farmers in a small way,

and living in a somewhat remote and desolate spot high up on the slopes of the Cotswolds. Devoted absolutely and entirely to each other, they had not minded the loneliness of their situation in the very least, but in the case of sudden illness, as now, a neighbour might have proved a blessing.

Poor Martin, the doctor was thinking drowsily, how he would hurry and tear back to Mary—across country straight as the crow flies, getting there probably before the doctor on the plodding tricycle. On a previous occasion there had come that cry in the night from Martin, when his son was born, a year ago now. How frantic he had been—poor Martin, mad with anxiety and fear and self-reproach, while the girl-wife had been so calm and unafraid. Poor Mary, poor girl-widow—John's death had been a cruel blow—the doctor's tricycle stopped with a jerk, in the darkness he sat, silent, immoveable, staring with distended, puzzled, incredulous eyes—John's death? Yes, John was dead right enough, killed with so many of the gallant Gloucesters on the land round Suvla Bay. But—whose then the voice in the night?—the voice which bade him to Lone Tree Farm, to "my wife"—Why—what had happened? Was he asleep? Had he "dropped off" in his bedroom and was this all a dream? But the night-wind cut his face with unmistakeable reality—he was not asleep, not dreaming, but he was all at once very much afraid, for John Martin, who was dead, whom soldier comrades had buried, had spoken to him that very night, had implored his aid for the wife he had so passionately loved—the stricken doctor started his machine again. Dream, or vision, or reality, or whatever it might be, the fact remained that he was wanted up at that lonely little house where Mary Martin lived her solitary life. What—who—should he find there?

There were beads of sweat on his brow, he was confident by now that a voice from the spirit-world had hailed him. Tired and exhausted as he had been he had temporarily forgotten John Martin's death, but now it all came back to him: recollection of the wife's agony of grief returned to him, recollection of letters from his soldier friends to the young widow—Oh, there was no mistake.

Weariness and discomfort were forgotten now as he proceeded on his way, he was only conscious of a great wonder and a great curiosity. In his long life of unselfish ministering to the suffering and poor many strange adventures had befallen him, but, on this bitter winter night when the very wind seemed full of whispers and suggestions, he felt he was on the edge of an experience hitherto outside his ken. One by one all signs of habitation disappeared, the scattered, outlying homesteads vanished, the road grew ever and ever more uphill, and ever and ever more solitary. He had often thought to warn Mary against living thus cut-off from her fellow creatures, and the necessity of doing so seemed borne in upon him more than ever as he realised afresh the loneliness of the little farm where she lived.

The house was silent and dark when he arrived at his journey's end. No light glimmered, no sound reached him, only a dog barking some distance away and—yes, a baby's feeble whimper from within. Trying the latch the doctor found the door open to his hand; he took his tricycle lamp and raising it above his head looked round.

A spotlessly neat kitchen, a child lying half-awake in a wooden cradle, a fire dead-out, a clock ticking loudly in the stillness, John Martin's photograph, crape-bound, laughing down from the mantleshelf.

He raised his voice and called. Silence. Fearfully he hurried up the stairs to the rooms above—emptiness and silence.

Convinced by now that something serious really had happened he ran outside and lifted up his voice in a loud Halloa. No answer, but somewhere that dog barked sharply and clamorously, and—was not that a glimmer of a light in the field? He hurried quickly through the yard and barton, jumped the railings with a forgotten agility, scattered the inquisitive yearlings clustering round the shelter of the barn, and guided by the dog's ceaseless barking and the yellow flicker of a light, came, first upon an over-turned but still burning lantern, then upon a woman's prostrate silent form, near which a dog crouched faithfully and raised its cry for human aid.

Hastily the doctor made what examination was possible in the feeble light afforded by the lantern and his own lamp. Mary was lying on her back with one arm bent ominously beneath her. It at least was fractured, if nothing more. Cold, pain, loneliness and fright had combined to produce unconsciousness, but in the journey to the house, that slow, painful, stumbling journey as the old doctor crept along with his burden inch by inch, she opened her eyes and groaned.

"All right, Mary, my poor girl—we'll soon have you comfortable" said he soothingly, all his professional instincts awake by now.

"It was them heifers and yearlings—all done in play—I take them their hay last thing when Bill the man has gone home—they knocked me clean over—an' the ground that 'ard—but John said he'd fetch you."

"John?" said the doctor faintly, putting her very gently on the settle and straightening his back—"John?"

"Yes—he said he'd get you an' mind that precious babby—" then suddenly the woman's voice rose and broke on a piercing scream—"Oh it was a dream" she shrieked "nought but a dream—He's dead—my John's killed, left to die, wounded on a battle-field,—Why did you wake me up? Why did'nt you let me die?"

Dorothy A. Chambers

THE CROOKED PATH

(A Spasmodic Episode).

PROLOGUE.

This story centres on a Letter written by a Liar.

It demonstrates the almost insolent ease with which the strategic Liar can vanquish and overcome all his difficulties.

It emphasises the platitude that Truth is a drug in the modern market.

I

WHEN Billy Williams succeeded in persuading Ethel, youngest daughter of Colonel Gordon Forbes, that he was the one and only man who was in any way qualified to marry her, it was not unnatural that he should feel pleased with himself. It is quite the conventional thing for a young man to do on and after such an occasion. And Ethel was lovely—tall, fair and strong, the type of young woman it is usual to describe as a "fine specimen of a healthy English girl." Certainly that description, despite its atmosphere of the dog-show, might have been applied to Ethel as well as, and perhaps better than, to most girls. Billy's opinion,—freely circulated, was that Aphrodite would have been a thirty-bob-a-week back-row-of-the-chorus proposition, had the ancient Greeks but known Ethel. But he was perhaps prejudiced.

Again, Ethel was her father's daughter. And the only thing about Colonel Gordon Forbes which could be regarded as in the least unsatisfactory, was his Colonelcy—the origin of which was a shade mysterious. It was understood that the Colonelcy was an honorary one of a Portuguese cavalry regiment, conferred by a grateful but impecunious Government on the head of the firm of Forbes, Martin & Co., Army Clothing Contractors. On his retirement from the turmoil and strife of the business of clothing armies, Gordon Forbes had assumed the title and done his best to disguise its origin. To that end he cultivated a heavy moustache, drank port wine, complained of his liver, and endeavoured, with poor success, to pose as an irascible tyrant. For the rest, he was a shrewd, likeable, educated man with a large fortune, a big house at Hampstead, four daughters and a genuine liking for the fiancé of the youngest of them.

Shortly after Ethel had promised to marry Billy, she had, on the ground that that there should be no secrets between engaged people, demanded a brief resumé of his life history up to that epoch-making event, with detailed and descriptive accounts of all his love affairs. Billy, being

desperately in love and filled with noble ideals, had made a rather unnecessarily clean breast of the business, giving full particulars as to names and personal descriptions of his earlier idols, comparing them, much to their disadvantage, with Ethel, and laying much emphasis on the statement that, in those days, he was young and foolish. This act of ingenuous imbecility accomplished, it struck Billy as a more than useful idea that it was only fair that Ethel should, in return, confide in him. Met with the beautiful but astounding information that he was Ethel's first and only love, it occured to him that, although older, he had not grown any less foolish with the passing years. Then he forgot all about the matter, which was the most foolish thing of all.

A month or two later, Billy, who was a fairly flourishing agent in what is called in America "real estate," found himself in correspondence with a firm in Brighton. It is, of course, a well known fact that business cannot be carried on satisfactorily by correspondence with Brighton. Brighton people have to be interviewed on the spot. So Billy decided to run over to Brighton for a few days.

Having reached this satisfactory decision, Billy remembered a girl in Brighton.

Billy reminded himself that he was engaged to Ethel, and that Ethel was inclined to be suspicious and hot tempered,——argued that even an engaged man had a right to speak to another girl if he wished,—convinced himself that there was nothing in it anyway—and so rang up the curtain.

For Billy wrote to the lady of Brighton, casually mentioning that he was running down there for a few days, and that it would be a curious coincidence if he should meet her again. By a regrettable oversight he omitted even to mention Ethel.

By another oversight, he had that letter, with several others, in the pocket of his overcoat when he went out to Hampstead to dine with the Forbes family.

It was not surprising that, on leaving—the process of saying Good-night to Ethel was wont to be conducted at some length on the doorstep—he should discover them in his pocket. Nor was it perhaps surprising that he should momentarily have forgotten their existence, and have hauled them forth into the light of the vestibule for examination. But it was distinctly unfortunate that he should have dropped the one addressed to "Miss Lily Redmond," and that Ethel should have picked it up.

Now "Lily Redmond" had been one of the most elaborate chapters in Billy's autobiographical confession.

There was an awful pause.

"Your letter," said Ethel politely.

"Ah—yes, thanks,—of course—yes," said Billy desperately,——"Er—an old client of ours, y'know—yes—er well,——Good-night, darling."

"Good-night" said Ethel shortly.

Her tone was so exceedingly Arctic, that Billy stopped short in dismay. At the same time he was seized with a curiously "all gone" feeling at the pit of the stomach. He made strange sounds in his throat.

"Er—er—um—ah—see you tomorrow dear—er—yes—er—er—must post that letter—old client of ours, Miss Redmond y'know."

"W. Williams," soliloquised that unhappy young man, on his way home, "you have put yourself into the bally slush, right up the eye-brows—you silly ass! Why the blazes didn't you post that letter? And why the holy dickens, did you tell such an infernally futile yarn about it—you feeble lunatic? Hang Ethel's temper—she'll raise Cain about this——Oh Hell!"

Sudden recollections of his confessions to Ethel, containing full and coloured details of "l'affaire Lily Redmond" pulled him up at this stage.

Then followed three swift resolutions.—

To drown himself!

To bolt to South America!

To tell Ethel the truth and throw himself on the mercy of the Court!

Each rejected in turn as being undignified and impossible. To do him justice, the third alternative received some consideration, but a first-hand knowledge of Ethel's jealousy and Ethel's temper settled its fate along with the others.

"No go, Bill, me lad," he said, "you've burnt your blooming boats this time. The programme is now 'Lie like the devil.' What the eye don't see the heart don't worry about. But why the blank Vesuvius you didn't post that letter when you wrote it———" and so on.

It was characteristic of him that he *did* post it before going to bed.

"You never know what's going to happen," he thought.

II

The interview had been heated from the outset.

"It's no use your talking," said Ethel, "I don't believe a word of it."

Billy embarked on another burst of rhetoric.

"You might just as well save your breath," interrupted the infuriated girl, "you are a perfect rotter, and I wish I'd never seen you."

"But Good God, Ethel——"

"And I dislike that expression."

Billy tried another one.

"And if you're going to swear at me, I'll go away at once."

Billy pulled himself together. "Now look here, Ethel, do be reasonable."

"I am reasonable."

"Don't be silly. You're in a furious rage, and—"

"I'm not. I'm quite cool. I admit I'm silly,—I'm a perfect fool to listen to you,——you liar!"

"Don't mention it, thanks!"

Ethel rose swiftly and made for the door.

"Ethel!"

She turned,—. "Well?"

"May I speak without interuption for two minutes?"

She sat down again. "You may if you wish, but it's of no earthly use."

"Thanks. Now," in a this-is-my-last-word-on-the-subject tone, "understand me. That letter was purely a business communication, written to a lady client. The fact that the client is an old friend of mine is a coincidence. You don't know what is in the letter—unfortunately I posted it last night in the heat of the moment or I could have shown it to you and proved how unjust your suspicions are. You are assuming the very worst about me—about the one person you might be expected to trust. You refuse to listen to my version of the matter; you are taking it on yourself both to try and to condemn me without a single tangible reason. Really Ethel, "(appealingly)" do give me a chance. You know how I love you! Surely, "(with a pathetic break in the voice)" you don't—you can't really think that I'd play you a trick of that sort?"

"O, how can you tell such lies?" said Ethel, "You don't mean a word of it. You are piling up lies on lies."

(Which was quite true).

Billy's gesture of despair was picturesque.

"Then you do not believe me?"

"Not a word."

"You really think," dramatically, "that I would play you false?"

"Of course I do. I'm beginning to doubt whether you have been straight all along. I suppose—I'm almost sure that you've been carrying on with that—that—*girl*," (heroically) "all the time you've been engaged to me, laughing at me for a silly fool for being taken in so easily. Well you shan't think it any longer. I've done with you. There's your ring! Take it to Lily, if she's fool enough to have it."

"Ethel, my darling," (hoarsely, with a suitable expression of despair) "on my word of honour—"

"Your *what*? Do you expect me to think———"

"I don't care what you think," gloomily, "you've spoilt my life. I never thought you could be so unfair. You'll be sorry for this when it's too late, You girls seem to think it good sport to knock the bottom out of a man's life and see him go to The Dogs as a result. I can only hope you don't feel as badly about it as I do. What will your father say to all this?"

"That is an impertinent question. I expect Dad will call me a fool," bitterly, "Like any other man, he'd want proofs."

"Naturally—and you haven't any. You know nothing—you only suspect."

"I don't want any—I know *you*."

At this point the hero rather lost himself.

"Ethel," he said, savagely "is that your last word? Are you going to throw me away like an old glove, because you think you've got all you can out of me? For Heaven's sake, think what you are doing."

She turned very pale.

"Don't you think you had better go?" she asked. Her voice was ominously quiet—her face set and hard.

The hero did think so, and left the stage.

III.

In his own rooms, Billy became increasingly conscious that he had not done himself much good at his interview with Ethel. He was desperately and honestly in love, and his conduct of the case had been due, not to any ingrained deceit, but because his moral courage was not equal to facing his fiancée's anger. Her intuitive penetration of his noble structure of mendacity had been an utterly unlooked for development. Also, there was no doubt that he had gone on too long. Had he (he thought) made a dignified exit at the conclusion of his "take-it-or-leave-it" speech, she might at least have doubted herself. As it was, he had stayed on long enough to lose his head and insult her. Nevertheless, he would have another try when she had had time to cool down. It was only reasonable to suppose that she would regret having lost her temper, and it was quite possible that if he could catch her in such a mood, she might be feeling rather more lenient towards her erring lover and more inclined to lend a favourable ear to his protestations.

But should he protest? Would it not be more consistent to adopt an air of injured aloofness and hint that an apology was due to him for doubting his word? The role of the injured innocent was always good business.

No, that dog wouldn't fight! Billy was quite sure that even his assurance was not equal to that course—at least, not with Ethel.

But at all costs, he must not now go back on his position. At the worst, if he stuck to his story, she could never be certain. And with a girl——

His meditations were interupted by the arrival of letters. Among others was a post-card from his brother-in-law announcing his arrival at Brighton and would he (Billy) run over and see him.

He most certainly would not! Brighton had suddenly become the Abomination of Desolation. It was a pity. He was fond of Joe and Mary. They would always do anything for him.

Then, in the dim recesses of his brain, Billy began to see a way through his trouble. A tortuous way, and a dangerous way, but, as he had already got quite out of his depth, he might as well swim.

"Bill my lad," he said aloud, "it's a dashed good scheme. If it don't turn the trick, nothing will. But, if Ethel could only know——whew!"

He sat down to write.

"The essence of strategy is forethought. Good old Kipling. That's what we wanted, Bill, me lad,—forethought! Here goes!"

"Dear Miss Redmond," he wrote,...............

Later, he wrote a shorter letter to his brother-in-law.

"Dear Joe,

Pressure of business keeps me in town at present, or I would have been glad to look you up. Your being at Brighton is, as it happens, a lucky chance. You can do me a very great service. The matter is quite innocent, quite private, and most unusual. Enclosed with this is a letter in a sealed, unaddressed envelope. What I want you to do is to return it to me *without opening it*, with a note, which must be written by Mary—a lady's writing is essential. See?—No, it's not what you think at all.! The note must be to the effect that she is returning my letter at my request, unusual as it is, and she hopes that there is nothing wrong with the information contained therein. She must sign the note 'Lily' and return it to me with this letter. That's all. Be a good man and get this done and I'll tell you the whole story later on. It concerns me and a lady, and I give you my Alfred David that it's going to do nothing but good in the world. Verb: sap:"

IV.

Ethel Forbes, taking an afternoon stroll across the Heath, became aware of a big, tweed-clad figure in the middle distance which could belong to no other than Billy Williams. From the studiously dejected air and carefully turned back she realised that he had seen her and, she assumed, was posing for her benifit.

With a tightening of the lips, she went deliberately to him. As she approached, he turned with an exclamation of surprise.

"You, Ethel!"

"Yes, how long ago did you see me? And how long have you been waiting for me?"

"Really, I—"

"Well, never mind that now. I want a word or two with you as it happens. If you will kindly hold your head up and try to look less like a wet sack, you may walk a little way with me."

"Ethel, I am utterly miserable."

"I think not. In any case you are overdoing it. What I want to say to you is,"—quickly—"that I am sorry for certain things I said to you yesterday. I'm afraid I lost my temper. Also the—other matter must not be reopened. I am terribly disappointed in you, and I don't want to see you in future. I've told dad that we've quarrelled, and no more. I must ask you to let it rest at that if he should ask you anything about it. I'd rather not let everybody know that I've been made a fool of."

They walked in silence for a few minutes. Ethel spoke again.

"That's all I want to say, Billy. You needn't come any further."

Billy cleared his throat, and skirmished for an opening.

"Ethel," he said hesitatingly, "don't you think that there's the slightest chance of—of—"

"I'm afraid not."

"I don't think," slowly, "that you quite realise what you've done—that the situation seems as absolutely beastly to you as it does to me."

No answer. Billy stealing a glance at the flushed face at his side, was not at all well satisfied at the impression produced. Obviously the colour wanted laying on a bit.

"In fact," he went on, "it's upset me so badly that I didn't go to bed last night at all. I couldn't, I simply sat up all night, worrying myself to blazes about it."—"That's on the wicket," he thought.

Ethel laughed outright. It suddenly struck Billy that there was no girl living with a laugh quite like Ethel. But there was a right and a wrong time for everything.

"Really, Billy," she said, "you are too ridiculous. I'm sorry to have to tell you again that I don't believe you."

"That's right," he said sulkily, "it's a good joke, isn't it? Sorry the humour of it hasn't struck me yet."

"No, Billy," she said quietly, "it isn't funny. It's ghastly. If I can trust you with an admission that you won't misunderstand, I don't mind telling you that I'm perfectly miserable. But I don't see the use of parading the fact."

Billy found difficulty in suppressing his satisfaction.

"Ethel," he pleaded, "don't be so hard. It's a terrible misunderstanding, and I'd give all I have in the world to put things back on the old footing. I do love you dearly—I shall always love you in spite of everything—but I don't see what more I can say to convince you. But, at the same time, I can't and I won't let this beastly business stop as it is. Is there any way of appealing to you?"

"I'd rather you said no more about it," said Ethel, "I'm sure I shan't alter. Once bitten you know—and I've had my lesson."

"You take an absurdly serious view of a very trivial matter, even if your suspicions were correct."

"Possibly. But I don't look at it in that way. I gave you every scrap of my love—I trusted you absolutely. Yet you correspond with another girl—one whom you admitted you were in love with—behind my back. I don't call that so very trivial."

Ethel's colour was heightening and Billy saw that she was getting angry. The autumn twilight was falling rapidly, a fact to which they had both been oblivious, and they had walked further than they knew.

"Heavens," said Ethel, "look where we are! Billy, it is mean of you to bring me right out here when you know I don't want to be seen about with you. I suppose I shall have to let you come back with me now. But, listen, no more of that subject *please*. It's over."

"Not yet," said Billy, who judged that now was the time to play his ace. "And," he thought, "if this doesn't fetch her, nothing ever will."

"Suppose," he said slowly, "that I was in a position to prove to you, *prove* mind, that you had made a very great mistake. Would that change your opinion?"

She swung round quickly. "What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean that I have done a very desperate and perhaps a very foolish thing. I have written again to Miss Redmond and asked her, as an urgent matter, to return the letter I wrote to her three days ago."—"And," (mentally) if ever I tell a bigger one than that may I be forgiven."

"You've done what?" cried Ethel.

("Aha," commented the amateur Ananias inwardly, "I thought that would rouse you!")

"I've done exactly what I say. There is just a chance that she may have kept the letter—it *was* rather important. If I get it back and show it to you, what then?"

She was silent for some time. Billy watched her narrowly, anxiously, on the look out for some sign of relenting, but in the uncertain light of the road lamps, the beautiful profile seemed quite expressionless.

"Billy," she said at last, in an even steady tone, "I don't think I quite know what to make of this. I don't know what to say. I've never failed to understand you yet, and I am as certain as I am of dying that you did not tell me ten words of truth yesterday morning. And, candidly, I think you are still telling lies. I'm sorry to say it, very sorry, and I'd give anything to be able to say that I believe you. If you *have* written as you say, it's quite clear to me that you expect the girl to write back and say she's destroyed the letter. Then you'll bring that reply to me with a sorrowful story of having done your best and expect me to take the will for the deed, and accept your good faith. I'm sorry if this hurts you—I hate having to say it—but it's no use my pretending that I'm very much impressed by this last move of yours. I am not going to be taken in again. The past can't be undone now, and unless you *can* produce the letter, you must not come to see me again. Now, that is absolutely final."

It was all Master William could do to keep the triumph out of his voice. But his tone was commendably grave, as he replied.

" Very well, Ethel. If I don't get that letter, I won't trouble you again. If I do, I will bring it to you."

Billy felt dignified. He began to be quite pleased with himself.

" Right," said Ethel shortly, " please don't come any further with me now. I'd rather go alone. Good-night—or rather, Good-bye."

" Good-*night*," he replied, with a faint emphasis on the second word.

He watched her tall figure until it disappeared in the darkness. Then he turned down the hill.

" It seems to me," he mused, " that a chap will go to some tall lengths when he's in love. I fancy I'm paying out a big slice of my immortal soul to put myself right with Ethel. But, by God, I'd sell myself to Old Nick himself in the same cause."

By and by another thought struck him.

" If she should ever find out, my lad, it will be South America for you, and no blithering error."

" I don't see how she can " he said aloud.

V.

Yes, Miss Ethel was in. Mr. Williams would find her in the drawing room.

He did.

He entered unannounced, and she sprang from the depths of a huge armchair, her face crimson, her eyes glowing.

" Billy ! " she exclaimed " What do you want ? "

" You " he said. In the nick of time, he strangled a grin.

He drew an envelope from his pocket and handed it to her.

It was fondly believed by his male associates that for sheer, shameless assurance, William Williams needed a special classification to himself. It is therefore noteworthy that on this occasion, he avoided Ethel's eyes, and gazed studiously at the fire.

Ethel took the envelope. It bore the Brighton postmark. It was addressed in a slanting, feminine hand, and inside was a letter—*two* letters.

Ethel flashed one quick glance at Billy, but fortunately for that young man, he did not see it. He had no intention of doing so.

The first letter was short.

" Dear Billy,

Here is the letter you wanted returned. I hope that nothing is wrong, although I can't think why you couldn't have written again if it was, instead of wanting your old letter back. Please write again and let me know what is at the bottom of this proceeding

Yours anxiously,

LILY."

(O Mary, if you only knew!)

The second was long. It contained much confusing information, a good deal of advice; some casual gossip; a few references to old times; an occasional lapse into a rather un-businesslike familiarity, (Billy had wrought with Machiavellian cunning, and intuition born of desperation), and concluded with kindest regards from "your old friend Billy."

And that was all.

There was a long and, to Billy, dreadful silence. He began to perspire gently.

Ethel was proud, and Ethel was faced with the keenest sense of shame and humiliation of her young life. At the back of her mind, a lurking suspicion, an instinctive insistence on her feminine intuition still remained. But, there was the letter, dated five days ago; there was the girl's note in returning it: and there was her real love for Billy, clamouring in its restraint, urging her to accept this piece of evidence unquestioningly and gladly. And the alternative explanation was too monstrous—too outrageous. There could be but one end to the struggle—if ever there was a struggle.

Billy, tired of the view of the hearth, and instinctively scenting victory, watched her eagerly.

"Well?" he queried, at last.

She turned to him with a quick, imploring gesture.

"Oh Billy, I *have* been a beast! Can you ever forgive me?"

Two into one does not go easily, even when the one is a fat saddlebag chair, but the feat was accomplished with commendable promptitude and—on Billy's part—no little violence. Subsequent proceedings were somewhat breathless.

"Bill Williams," he apostrophised himself, winking gleefully at the clock over Ethel's golden head, "thank your lucky stars you're out of *that* mess. The cove who burnt his boats and couldn't go back knew his business—nothing like a tight corner for stimulating the intellect. Nothing like being in love for removing a chap's scruples—nothing."

His meditations were interrupted.

"Billy," said Ethel, extricating herself from the armchair, "do you know you've been here nearly an hour? Get up and tell me if I look very much of a fright. Dad'll be in directly."

"You look," said Billy, "like— —"

But the rest is not connected with the story.

EPILOGUE.

The utter and essential immorality of this story is regretfully admitted. In a properly managed episode of this description, Ethel should have sprung the counter-mine that Lily was her dearest friend and, astounded at Billy's

perfidy, had secretly sent the original letter to his fiancée. Then would the deceiver have been cast forth with scorn, virtue triumphing as it should always do, and everyone concerned rendered thoroughly miserable.

But, strangely enough, nothing of the kind happened. Ethel remained in complete ignorance of her lover's abominable deceit, and they married and lived happily ever after.

The moral is too dangerous to be drawn.

J. G. Bott

THE STATUE

OBSCURE among my hills I hewed
Unskilfully and slow the rude
Undowelled granite ; friendless, lone,
I sought to carve my dream on stone,
And though the hovering vision came
To purge my spirit, clear my aim,
And though the essential god-head gleamed
Whereby my failure was redeemed,
Yet scarce availed my heavy hand
To consummate the thing I planned.

As one who, blinded by the gleam
Achieves Olympus in his dream,
So, 'mid the carven deities
With humbled heart and reverent knees
I stood, my foiled ambition blent
With worship, praise and wonderment,
My work, a shapeless, joyless thing
Gloomed in a niche, for art to fling
Its just contempt upon. In shame
I waited while the judges came
To name the victor. Waiting thus
There came a change miraculous,
Unseen of all men's eyes save mine.
I saw my statue grow divine,
The uncouth curves expanding slow,
The rigid limbs with ardour glow,
The grimness of the poise relent,
And grace suffuse each lineament ;
I saw my statue strangely lit,
As in my heart I fashioned it
Before the wonder thing I planned

Trembled before my impious hand,—
A marble form wherein did lurk
No trace of human handiwork,
In just perfection, purged of dross
White as the foam round Tenedos.

Then surging as through depths of air
But soft as dusk,—I was aware
Of music beating through the mesh
Of sightless, unresponsive flesh,
And one sweet voice that mounted free
Came urgent as with prophecy :—
  " All pomp and ecstasy of art
  " That spring not from a lowly heart
  " Rooted in love alone, are vain,
  " And love to whom through years of pain
  " Your worship went, brings forth the fruits,
  " And all your faltering work transmutes
  " To curves of mastery whereon
  " Love sets his seal and benison."

EDWIN STANLEY JAMES

THE FIDDLER

HE fiddled down the narrow street,
  Between the barrows tripping :
The merry haunting little air
Round older hearts went gripping,
And set the little urchin's feet
A-hopping and a-skipping.

He fiddled through the weary town,
Set every pulse a-throbbing,
From windows suddenly thrown wide,
Out came the heads a-bobbing.
And some folk smiled as he passed down,
And some folk fell a-sobbing.

Across the waste, and to the sea
He fiddled merry-hearted.
The children idly drifted back
To games that they had started.
I wonder why he left with me
A sense of joy departed.

IRENE M. MAUNDER

A SUMMER NIGHT

HER head fell back in my arm, and her long-lashed eyes looked up,
Dusky with dreams and desire, as I kissed her firm white throat,
Where the golden shadows moved like wine in a glorious cup;
And her voice grew sweet as viols, with a tender, tremulous note.

Darkness fell like a cloak, wrapping us softly round,
And a cool air came and moved among the murmurous leaves. . .
When lo! the love-swoon left us bereft on the dewy ground,
As star by star the Day the mourning Night bereaves.

The passion flamed and fled, but lingering on my lips
Lie her long-remembered kisses like a beautiful passionate flower.
Oh, through my straining arms her warm white body slips,
But in my heart for ever is the memory of an hour!

G. E. Slocombe

THE SONG OF THE WOAD-GATHERERS

DAWN, heralded by rose-shafted cloud-darts in a silver sky, awakened the dreaming fen-lands, as damp shadowy vapours were distilled from the creeks and marshes.

Herds of cattle, immense raw-boned beasts, swam across the deep waters to the pastures of rape and coleseed, or lingered around the brackish creeks on the foreshore of the Wash.

Bevies of rare birds flying from bush to bush, ate their fill of bramble and berries, or skimmed low over the surface of the pools. The fairyland of the fens lay discovered in the soft light, but, though rich in unsurpassable beauty, its covering of luxuriant flowers spread over the sepulchral horrors of decay.

A little girl tripped along a lonely cattle-track wending towards the silver streak of sea that gleamed beneath the dawning of day. She sang as her bare feet danced from haff to haff of coarse, wet grass; sang as a turquoise-backed king-fisher paused, fish in bill, to watch her, and still singing, she sank down to rest upon a dewy heap of sedge-rakings.

It was a merry little song she trilled with her childish treble, a folk-song of lads and lasses dancing at the fair, with a word of warning and foreboding in the dirgeful refrain.

"But th' butterbump be boomin' in th' sedge."

She was silent at last as she brushed aside a tiny frog from her brown toes. Tiny puckers spoiled the fairness of the child-brow shadowed by the sea-bleached curls, and her grey eyes lost their radiance.

"I munt sing th' lasst part," she said aloud to the baby frog "Susannah says I munt. Nay, 't'were so sad, her sayed."

The small reptile goggled his eyes at her from his hassock of grass, then slid out of sight under the wet weeds.

"I wunner ef her knowed he wëar a Fen Nightingale," she murmured, with the readiness of one accustomed to talk to herself. "Et be a rare, fine name for a wee bëast. An' her sayed," reverting apparently to the Susannah of her thoughts, "lissen fer th' chimes. What *fer*?"

She faced south-west to gaze at the distant tower of St. Botolph, that wonderful grey sentinel of the old town, more beautiful as the ages pass.

"Now then, Betsy," she said, wisely to herself "get thee goan er Maister Sun 'ull be oop afore thee 'st gotten th' samphey."

The swinging easily the huge home-woven sedge-basket she carried, little Betsy wended her way across mud flats, through cold brackish creek water, or gaily over banks of fragrant thyme and pungent yarrow.

Singing, ever singing, as she went.

The sun's first warm rays shone brightly as she laid the first crisp stubby plant of salicornia herbacea in her basket, and the murmuring sea blended in harmony with her clear little melody as the waves broke in peaceful ripples upon the brown sand beyond the mud.

By early noontide, Betsy's basket was filled, so she climbed up the old Roman sea-bank and lay full-length on the saltish grass with her chin resting on her hands, and her head turned seaward.

Far away in the deeps a brown-sailed merchantman was sailing towards the Boston docks. Betsy watched the pretty little sun-flecked sails, dreaming as was her wont of all the sweet-scented spices, and marvellous Eastern shawls and silks that might comprise the ship's cargo.

Jason, Susannah's cousin, was a sailor, a big man who wore gold earrings in his ears, and had his hair plastered in a stiff pigtail. A man who spoke queer and terrifying words, who kissed her roughly, and rubbing her fresh young cheek against his scrubby jaw. Betsy frowned as she thought of him —she did not like Jason Wealdsby.

She dismissed the subject from her thoughts and drew her lunch out of the bosom of her ragged homespun dress. Lunch consisted of a large triangular pasty filled with a savoury of young nettles cooked with goose, the remnants of a hapless bird that had drowned itself in a pool, being caught fast in a shroud of weeds.

It was good eating, that cazzlety meat, and Betsy ate it with relish, biting a pattern first around the thumbed-up edge.

"T' were rare good," she said, aloud, licking each slender finger in turn,

"Rare good, but I'm feared th' old goose wunt luve me anymore, t'were a clunch creeter, an all."

She left her basket of wet samphire, and wandering along the high grassy bank, watched the myriads of sea-birds squabbling over a shoal of fish. Then she passed the scattered thatched huts of some fisherman.

Thence, towards the vast expanse of fen solitude went Betsy, singing snatches of rhymes and folk-songs, milking croons, and lastly, the low sad song of the Woad-gatherers.

Then, in response on the wings of the breeze came the same low lullaby.

"Her 'air 't' wëar like th' stars
O' God,
Her een wëar blue as th' balls
O' wad—
Crushed in th' mill, O,
Crushed in th' mill."

At the bend of the bank the child sighted some women kneeling amongst a field of purple-headed woad-plants, and they sang as they weeded the earth.

"Crushed in th' mill, O," echoed Betsy, tunefully, but the women did not pause in their work. Life did not allow them more than a momentary glance aside from their drudgery—the woad-farmer's authority was backed by the sting of whip-end on work-deformed backs. Besides, what cared they for Betsy? They had children at home, rosy-cheeked rascals, who ate too much, and numbered too many.

"Thear be bairns enow," said one woman later to a comrade, "Thear be bairns, enow, wi'out Mad Jane's ill-gotten Betsy."

"Ay," was the ready response.

Then, suddenly, Betsy raced along the bank, waving her bare arms in ecstasy.

"Huallah! Huallah!" called she, making the weird sound ring in space, "Jabe, Jabe."

Far away, against the beauty of a bed of king-cups her fen-trained eyes discerned the figure of a man lying in the sun, and by a bright spot of colour at one end of the recumbent figure she knew it to be Jabez Langrick, a fowler or fenslodger,—her cousin.

"Jabe, Jabe," the childish treble reached the inner consciousness of the dreaming man; he raised himself from his herb-scented couch, and came towards her.

He was very tall, but sadly narrow-chested, although the richest of colours seemed to have been absorbed into his being from the beauty of the flowers and birds around. His hair was ruddy-gold as the heart of a wild-rose, and his eyes were kingfisher blue. For the rest, his features were ordinary, his skin tanned and reddened, but the vividness of hair and eyes distinguished him the ruck of men.

But, then, save on fair-days, Jabez did not associate much with members of his own sex, he was the idol of many lasses, whose men hated him.

"Oh! Jabe," called Betsy as she shook her lint-coloured hair out over her eyes, "Thee'st bean aslape."

"Nay, nay, bairn, he said, laughing gently, "I've bean sun-dreamin,' lettin' all th' chitter o' th' birds, and th' scent o' th' flowers creep into me soul."

Betsy nodded. There was, in them both, a strain of imaginative sensibility bequeathed to them perhaps, by some remote bard-ancester. To the child, alone, did Jabez reveal the poetry of his thoughts.

"Ay, bairn," he resumed his thread of thought, with a bright, almost wild light in his eyes, "I'm that full o' joy this day as almus' scars me. Lissen!"

He caught hold of her hand, and the weird rhapsody of nature in motion sounded around them.

Birds and insects made music with song and wing, soft, purring undertone of whirring wing, sweet clear soprano of song,—dim distance rippling of waves, and overhead a nightingale soloist sang at Heaven's Gate.

Then, as the symphony blended in unutterable sweetness with the scent of the thyme upon which Jabez had rested, a breeze blew across their faces. A breeze tainted with rankness of decay, whilst faintly came a sinister note into the natural orchestration—boom-boom-boom. A lonely bittern in a distant swamp was protesting against the song of rapture as she rested with uplifted bill.

Betsy's happy face altered.

"That butterbump scars me," she whispered as she noted the momentary alarm in Jabez expression, "et minds me of the night o' th' flood."

"I haäte ta hear him," said the young man violently, "an' now, an all, blamed ef th' sun beant clouded.

"Times," remarked Betsy, inconsequently, "I thinks th' sun looks at th' earth too long, an' when her sees all th' appy birds, an' buzzard-clocks, an' starnels, an' butterflies, an' flowers, her jest caent bear th' joy, an' so God puts a cloud agen her een."

"Morelike her weeps a bit at th' trouble below," remarked Jabez, sagely, "but thear, an all, I beant be in trouble, lass, I befit ta brussen mesen wi' joy."

Betsy's round eyes were turned towards him with a sudden gleam of most unchildlike wisdom in their depths.

"Thee'st bean coortin' agen."

"Lasst time, lass, lasst time," he said, his voice thrilling with emotion, "I'm fixed oop at lasst."

"Where et at th' Fairing?" asked the child, gravely.

"Ay."

"What didst 'ee do?" she enquired, naively, "didst thee kiss her, an all?"

"I did that, an all," he laughed, then he lifted Betsy up in his arms, "Bide th' time, bairn, thee be full youn' ta chitter so."

"Et beant Susannah?" she asked, anxiously.

He put her down, and laid a gentle hand on her curls.

"Thee mun get now, Tettie," he said, kindly, "thee'st wandered far, a full five mile, an' t'will be a rare time bidin' thee gets whoam."

He did not say as much, but thought dubiously of the welcome she would receive from her shrewish aunt who had adopted the orphan Betsy through sheer necessity.

Then suddenly Betsy raised her head and listened, her gaze fixed upon old Boston Stump.

"Bells," she said briefly.

Jabez listened also and then smiled.

"Wedding chimes, an all—ah! th' joy o' et all."

"Susannah tol' m' ta lissen fer them," said Betsy, slowly as she laid a caressing hand upon his ragged sleeve, "that's part why I came ta meet thee," she added, "I've gotten a word fer thee fra her."

"Fra Susannah!" cried Jabez, his face glowing "Why! bairn, out wi 'et."

Her sayed. "Tell 'im ter lissen fer th' chimes this arternoon, tell 'im," she spoke slowly as if recalling the message word by word, "tell 'im I 'm a poor footy creeter what mun ha' fripperies, an' falladols. Tell 'im I aent worthy o' im and so tell 'im ta lissen ta th' chimes and ferget me."

"I've telled ye all—" she ended.

Jabez stood stockstill as if he were listening to some well-known recitation, and were debating about its merits. Then, suddenly, he turned to the child, wild remembrances and misgivings rushed through his brain, he spoke as though he were stunned.

"Ha' thee seen her cousin aboot lately like?"

"Lasst night," answered Betsy, promptly. "He wëar acoortin' Susannah, an' gave her a ring—a yaller 'un. Harkee! those be still weddin' bells."

"Thee had better be goan," he said, stonily, "God-be wi ' ee," he added with bitterness.

The child dared not to caress him. He stood with the brilliant sunshine streaming upon his gleaming strands of hair but his vivid eyes were closed, and his mouth agonised. In silence, Betsy kissed the gripped hands and passed from him. Her tender sensitive child-hear taching from sheer agony of the mystery of love repulsed.

As she disappeared beneath the crest of the bank, Jabez took a blind step or two forward, then sank down upon the soft thyme, arms outstretched—a figure of suffering incarnate.

Poor wee Betsy. Tears blinded her eyes, sobs shook her thin shoulders, all the beauty of earth and sky seemed but more resplendent beside the mystified suffering within her heart. Even though Susannah married Jason, were there not dozens of nice lasses about, nicer than Susannah? What did it matter? Jabez could choose from a bunch of pretty maids.

But the stern, hoarse-spoken man on the bank was not her Jabez, and at

the thought of occult change in him, her superstitious mind caused her to run, terror-stricken, across the sands.

Oh! what a weary, weary scramble for tired feet over creek, and mudflat to the sands, then a mile or so upon the freshly-rippled sand to the bank again where she had left her basket. She could not stop to make the detour of the path upon the sea-bank, besides, the thought of supernatural agency concerning the change in Jabez, made her fear the green of the grass.

Half-way! There was no song upon her lips, no laughter in her eyes, she was needless of her way.

Spent with baffled passion, Jabez lay until the sun's lessening heat warned him that the snares and nets must be set ready for the morrow. Habit controlled suffering for the moment, and sullen pride was beginning to urge him to despise Susannah's false and alluring beauty. He rose eventually, and climbed the sea-bank, stood there, gazing sea-ward towards the hazy sealine. In the far distance he imagined that he could see a little figure moving wearily across the sands.

"Poor wee soul," he thought, tenderly, "such another singin'-bird to be silenced by some such cursed brute o' a Jason—"

Then as he watched a distant spot, his eyes seemed to play him false, surely that blur of red was wee Betsy's homespun frock, disappearing—sinking—gone!

A sea-bird whined overhead, and boom—boom—boom—the bittern was calling.

A wild light dawned in Jabez's eyes, and a weird rush of exultation thrilled him, searing his sensitive artistic soul with an ugly scar of eternal bitterness—

"Oh! God," his thoughts sang on, louder than the cry of the bird in the marsh, but still softer than the lark above, "one thing less to suffer, one victim saved from man's cruelty."

A sea-gull hovered over the distant quick-sand.

Then as if in sobbing prayer, a bell tolled from the old Frieston Church, and low, low came the song of the homeward wending woad-women.

"Crushed in Life's mill—O,
Crushed in Life's mill."

Constance A. Cocksedge

Carey John Cole.

Obiit 25th May, 1916.

He served God reverently on diverse altars
And friendship is his sweet memorial;
With nature, art and lyric words for psalters
He served God reverently on diverse altars
And who shall say that now his spirit falters
When death has crowned him with the best of all?
He served God reverently on diverse altars
And friendship is his sweet memorial.

E. S. J.

The death, on the 25th May, 1916, of Mr. C. J. Cole, removed, to our great regret, one of the most valued and distinguished contributors to this Magazine, and one of the oldest and best known members of the Manuscript Club. Thanks to the courtesy of Mr. Cole's executors, the Editor has been privileged, at the request of the Manuscript Club, to have access to Mr. Cole's unpublished MSS. with a view to including some of them in this issue of "The Manuscript," as a tribute to their author's memory.

The following pages contain a selection, unfortunately limited by considerations of space to meagre proportions, from those writings. The selection has necessarily been guided by the desire to bring, within the small compass available, the most representative features of Mr. Cole's varied literary output, and, in consequence, only the shortest MSS. have been used. This consideration has, unfortunately, compelled the exclusion of much work of perhaps greater actual merit than any of that included, and for this, and for all other shortcomings of judgment in making this selection, the Editor offers, to all the admirers of Mr. Cole's writings in this Magazine and in "The Literary World," "The Literary Monthly" and elsewhere, his sincerest apologies.

THE POET'S CROWN

AS the last words of the young poet's song died away, the guests at the royal feast stirred involuntarily after the long silence in which they had been held spell-bound. The king smiled complacently. It is true that he had not been listening, for his thoughts had been engrossed by passionate dreaming ; but he knew that the song had been about the valiant deeds of his ancestors, so he could safely be gracious.

"Our thanks, O Dalel," he announced clearly. "Sing again at our feast to-morrow. Sing how this kingdom was won by our father—may he rest in paradise!—and of the beginning of our glorious reign. At midnight thou shalt sing—when the feast is at its best—and I will give thee a golden circlet, the crown of the monarch of song."

Dalel bowed ; and retired from the king's presence, down the stately banqueting-hall, through the dark corridors, into the gardens. As he emerged into the clear moonlight he paused for a moment to drink in the cool air ; for he was of a mountain-tribe, and the sultry lamp-lighted rooms of the palace stifled him.

As he stood there, clearly visible in the silver light, the low boughs of a tree near moved, and a delicate hand drew him into the dense shadow. In turn he stretched out his arm, holding the girl's slim figure away from him, questioning her with earnest gaze. She met his eyes bravely. "Nay, thou mayest take me in thy arms, Dalel," she cried. "I am still thine—unpolluted as yet. The king leaves me untouched until after to-morrow's midnight. I told him it must be so—a matter of my gods—that purifications were necessary. But then——."

She gazed at him eagerly.

"But then," he repeated. "I sing at midnight, and the king will not like the ending of my song. Afterwards I return to my father's tents on the far mountains, where strangers never come, and only the simple flocks watch our happy life. Sage bearded fathers, learned in the paths among the crags, where only a goat's hoof can tread ; placid mothers ; and—Aziz, Aziz—their little ones follow them!"

* * * *

As Dalel passed through the silent streets of the town to his lodging, the vision he had called up stayed with him, and he sang :—

"Cool night on the mountains ;
Beneath the high rocks,
On the clear grassy spaces
Lie resting the flocks."

A voice answered him out of the shadow of the houses ; "Dalel, is it thou?"

He stopped and peered carefully at the man he could discern but vaguely. "Yea, it is I," he said. "I was hoping to meet thee, for the time is appointed. I sing at midnight during to-morrow's feast. As the song ends, a torch will be thrust from an upper window. That will be the signal. And thou—thou wilt be at the north gate of the palace with two horses. One for thee, and a strong one for me—though its added burden will be light enough."

* * * *

Once more the poet's song ceased, amidst shouts of approbation. He bowed, then looked towards the king steadily. The latter had twisted round on his divan, and had stretched one arm towards Aziz, who stood trembling, leaning against a pillar. She drew back in horror—then recovered her presence of mind and whispered, "Not yet, not just yet—the poet awaits his crown."

"True," muttered the king, and gave sign that it should be brought. As he rose to place it on the poet's head, a shriek of agony was heard outside. The guests sprang to their feet, listening apprehensively to the sounds of hurrying steps, clashing of weapons, and shouts of triumph that followed, mingled with groans and death cries.

Suddenly the curtain over the doorway was dragged aside and a captain of the guard staggered in, the blood streaming from a ghastly wound in his side.

"O king—live—for ever," he gasped. "The people—the people—they have risen in revolt. The gardens, the corridors are full of them; they throng the shadows. They spare none—fly!" He fell—clattering.

Silence again, bewildered, aghast; and then, like a breaking wave, the mob hurled itself through the doorway, waving torches, cutting down the flying guests with their impromptu weapons, yelling, blood-thirsty, mad.

* * * *

Dalel seized a sword from a dying soldier, and strode towards the royal divan.

The king, forgetful of self for once in his life, hurriedly thrust Aziz behind him, and stood bravely defiant. Perhaps he realised, as if revealed by the lightning flash of the rapid action, that his would-be assailant was also his rival, for a grim smile exulted on his lips as he turned to seek a weapon. But too late—e'er he could hurl the heavy brazen cup he snatched from a table near, the sword sheered straight from his shoulder to the opposite hip, flooding his effeminate light robe to kingly purple, and he sank lifeless on the steps.

Striding across him, Dalel lifted Aziz on to his shoulder.

"Shut thy eyes, beloved," he cried above the tumult of the fight, "thou must not see the path we have to tread. Clasp thy hands round my brow, hide thy face against my head. That carcase promised me a golden crown—thy arms will make a better one!"

He faced the long hall, waiting till the movements of the combatants gave him passage. Then, triumphantly bearing his prize, he began to make his way, past the rain of weapons, over the bodies of the slain and dying. There was enough light to see by—for the overturned lamps had set fire to the costly hangings, and the great hall roared with flame.

Clear above the whirlwind of battle rose his voice, as he sang:

"Cool night on the mountains;
Beneath the high rocks,
On the clear grassy spaces
Lie resting the flocks.

Shaggy fathers—keen climbers;
Mild mothers who keep
Calm watch o'er their young ones
Beside them, asleep.

He paused as he strode over an eunuch, writhing in the death agony.

"Pale light in the heavens;
Still lighter, for soon
Above the high ridges
The placid-faced moon

Smiles down on the haven
In which men have share
With the beasts of the pasture,
Afar from all care."

❊ ❊ ❊ ❊

The riders stopped their horses' rapid flight on the hill outside the town, and stared back to where the golden flame of the burning palace streamed up to heaven, and the streets seethed with triumphant revolt.

Then they rode on again swiftly towards the long range of distant mountains showing clearly, in majestic calm, against the whitening dawn.

The song could be heard again, above the beat of the horses' hoofs.

"Afar from all longing,
From evil, from strife,
From the turmoil of passion,
The fever of life."

C. J. Cole

A SECLUDED HOUSE

GIULIANO, count of a rock-perched castle in the Casentino, cursed his youthful provincialism, that had led him to wander alone at night through the robber-infested, gloomy streets of Perugia.

He raised himself cautiously on his left arm from the roughly paved roadway; he was painfully conscious that his right arm had been run through by a sword, and that there was a deep gash on his left thigh. The narrow alley was deserted; also dark, for the moon shone only on the upper stories of the houses on one side. All the windows were closely shuttered. He alone seemed to be awake in the silent town. The only signs of his late assailants were his sword, lying broken beside him, and the slit in the empty wallet hanging from his belt.

He searched his clothes—all else had gone—gold chain, jewelled fastening of his cloak, and his rings. They had left his crucifix, though, still hanging on a ribbon round his neck, inside his tunic; but that would have been taken, too, had it been of silver or gold, instead of a figure of time-stained ivory on a rough black wooden cross.

He looked around anxiously—he was evidently far from the inn he was staying at, and no other would receive him in his moneyless condition. He was not sure where he was—but a projecting turret, catching the clear moonlight, at the corner of the alley, seemed familiar. Recalling the day's wanderings, he remembered standing at that corner in the early morning, watching the country folk entering the town for the market. There had been several pretty girls among them. He remembered, too, that his curiosity had been aroused by a secluded house, hidden by a high wall, at the end of a short passage to the left. He had caught sight of a gabled roof between the trees. It was probably a convent—surely the monks would give a wounded man shelter for one night? If he could only drag himself there.

That painful journey—along one alley, across the moonlit street, and up the shorter alley—remained vividly in Giuliano's memory for the rest of his life; but at last it was over, and lifting himself up the steps he bent anxiously on the closed door. There was no answer.

He felt more sure that it was a convent as he saw a niche above the door; but he could not see it clearly, for the pediment above cast a deep shadow over it. Apparently it represented a woman.

He bent again upon the door. Soon he heard soft footsteps approaching along the covered passage leading from the house, and there was a glimmer of lamplight through the chinks of the door. He heard, too, the murmuring of voices. He bent again upon the door and cried aloud, "Help! For the love of Gesu! I am dying!"

Then a woman's voice said clearly: "Open the door, Agatha—it is someone in trouble."

The door was slowly opened, and he saw, by the light of the lamp, two women covered from head to feet by dark drapery. The one holding the lamp was elderly and was apparently a servant; the other was young and stately of figure, and he was aware that a face of great beauty gazed at him with pity from between the heavy folds. He fell forward at her feet, murmuring, "Just for one night—one night—if the convent will allow——." With a sharp cry she knelt beside his unconscious figure. "Shut the door, Agatha," she ordered.

With caution bred of experience, Agatha peered out into the street, but no pursuers lurked in the shadows. She closed and barred the heavy door. Her mistress looked up—a brief scrutiny had shown her Giuliano's injuries. "Where shall we put him?" she asked. "There is accommodation enough just now," replied the servant, "till—they—return."

"No, not for such as he is," said her mistress. The ribbon round his neck had caught her notice, and she had pulled out the little crucifix.

She thought for a moment or two—fixedly gazing at it. "He had best go to your room—you can sleep elsewhere," she said at last.

"Truly," answered Agatha, grimly, "it is bare enough."

Her mistress frowned—then bit her lips as if to stop a smile.

"Help me to carry him there," she commanded, "then go for a doctor. But do not tell the others."

"You are right, Madonna," grumbled the old servant, "the holy sisters should not be told of the arrival of so handsome a gallant."

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Late the next morning Giuliano awoke to consciousness, after a weary delirious night. Remembering gradually the events of the previous evening, he was not surprised at finding himself lying on a bed, in a plain white-washed cell. The younger woman was seated on a chair by the bedside; a rough table was the only other article of furniture. On the wall, at the foot of the bed, hung an ivory crucifix, curiously like his. Outside the open window, clambering red and white roses framed a space of deep blue Italian sky. He turned his head towards the black-robed figure seated beside him. Once more he was struck by the pity in her lovely face.

"Lie still," she said gently. "You are safe here, and may stay until you are well. A doctor has attended to your wounds."

He lay quietly for a little while. Then he asked in a low voice, "Can I see the priest?"

"The priest?" she answered, perplexedly.

"Yes, your father-confessor—the priest of the convent."

"Ah," she said, "I understand, but——."

"Perhaps your rule is very strict," he queried, "and the priest does not come until death does?"

She shivered. " No, he does not come until Death approaches. But a priest does visit us at times," she added. " If he comes while you are here, you shall see him."

She said to herself, " It will be better than no one."

" You are the Abbess ? " he asked.

" They call me so," she answered.

He looked curiously at the heavy folds of her dark drapery, he thought he could detect a white robe beneath its edge. " What is your order ? " he asked. " I do not know your habit ; and last night the deep shadow hid the saint above your doorway."

An odd look flickered in her eyes. " No," she said, " you would not see the saint."

" But what is your order ? " he asked again.

She looked out at the roses and the blue sky, and her face was wan and tired. " Of the Magdalene," she answered, in a low voice. Then she turned to him with a womanly smile. " But now Messire must sleep," she ordered.

* * * *

A fortnight later Giuliano stood, weak, and with his arm in a sling, but fully clothed, beside the open window where the roses grew—red and white roses in the golden Italian sunshine. The doctor had given him leave to return to his inn that day—a letter was waiting for him outside the convent. All attempts on his part to bestow alms, for thanks, on the institution, had been refused by the Abbess. He might give something to Agatha, the porteress, if he wished, as he had occupied her room.

He understood that his departure was a relief. He had overheard the Abbess and Agatha discussing the expected arrival of certain mysterious, but evidently important, guests. They were apparently of his sex, and had been for some time at Rome—probably an embassy of ecclesiastics, returning to tell the convent the Holy Father's decision on some matter of discipline.

Now he and the Abbess stood opposite each other, by the rose encircled window, silent with the embarrassment of a parting, with no likelihood of meeting again.

Suddenly, with an exclamation, she took the crucifix from the wall and gave it to him. " Yes, it is yours," she explained. " Agatha had not one." " Your rule does not encourage the use ? " " Only two or three of the sisters have such," she answered, with inscrutable eyes.

" There is one thing more I want," he hesitatingly asked, " of you."

" Of me ? " she answered, in surprise.

He pointed to the window. " Yes, of you, Madonna—just one rose."

" Ah, a rose. And which does Messire prefer—the red or the white ? "

" Surely the white—so pure and gentle, like yourself. The red is the flower of passion and sin."

She bowed her head, with half-shut eyes, and gave him the white rose, which he put in his mended wallet.

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At sunset she stood again by the window—feverish, alone.

She plucked another white rose, gazed at it in deep thought, then flung it impatiently into a corner of the room. She gathered red roses—full blown, deep-scented, luxuriant in beauty; and flinging back her dark draperies, fastened the flowers where her white silk robe was cut low over her superb bosom. Then she stood listening, with head erect.

There were sounds as if a gay, riotous throng had invaded the convent, shouting, laughing, singing, dancing. Similar sounds welcomed them from within the house; voices called to her. The dark drapery had now fallen to the floor—revealing the masses of shining hair, the gleaming shoulders, the richly embroidered white robe. Her face flushed, her bosom panted, she laughed aloud. Tearing a long spray of red roses from the bush outside the window, she sped from the room.

"Io, io, Bacchus!" sang the unseen revellers. "Io, io," she called, as she danced with stately step down the long corridors, until a curtain drawn aside admitted her to the entrance of a brightly lighted, gorgeously decorated chamber. Round a well-loaded banqueting table lounged on couches dissolute young nobles; beside them were damsels; bold-eyed, bare-shouldered, richly jewelled. A shout welcomed their "Abbess." She waved her bunch of red roses as if it were Circe's wand.

"The feast for Bacchus—the night for Venus!" she declared.

"Yet Venus crowns the feast," hiccuped the bedizened fop at whose side she sank.

C. J. C.

IN WAR TIME

THE bride was dressed for marriage;
  And loud the merry jests
The youthful bridegroom bandied
  With all the jovial guests;
When there glided to the threshold
  A woman gaunt and grim—
With shrivelled hand she beckoned
  And laid her spell on him.

"Ere rose the cloud-capped mountains,
Ere flowed the ocean tide,
Thou wast destined as my bridegroom,
I was chosen as thy bride ;
Though crowned with faded laurel,
Though robed in blood-stained pall,
I am worthier of thy worship
Than the fairest maid of all.

I do not pay my lovers
With kisses or with gold ;
On the bride-bed of the moorlands
Their bones lie bare and cold ;
On the fields of ghastly harvest
In nameless graves they sleep ;
They sway among the sea-weed
In the hollows of the deep.

But none has ever failed me ;
But none has e'er denied
My right to claim his manhood—
I am thy chosen bride !
Mine, mine thy heart's devotion,
And mine thy latest breath—
For my name is deathless Honour,
My home the halls of death."

Pale grew the youthful bridegroom,
But not a word he spake ;
He gazed upon the woman,
And he felt his heart would break ;
But on his lips there hovered
A smile of dauntless pride—
And he loosed from off his shoulders
The fierce clutch of his bride.

He heeded not her wailing,
He thrust her kin away ;
One look he gave his mother,
Who could not bid him stay ;
From out that house of weeping,
Howe'er the guests might rave,
He followed the grim woman
To the bride-bed of the grave.

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But one who met them going
  Said she who went with him,
In the glory of the sunset,
  Was no longer old and grim ;
But a young and stately maiden,
  White-robed, whose flowing hair
Was crowned with fresh green laurel
  And twined with flowers fair.

C. J. Cole

LINES FOR P.M.

A LITTLE round body ; two hazel eyes
  Viewing the world with a naive surprise ;
Ten busy fingers—ten curling toes ;
A smile ; and a small ridiculous nose ;
Why should it happen that these should be
A cause of joy, and a mystery,
A wave of the flood of eternity ?

Baby darling—my little friend—
What will you be at my journey's end ?
From the prattle of childhood will you grow
Till your girlhood's sweetness demure I know ?
Shall I see you pass from the peaceful wood
That shelters the flowers of maidenhood ?
Shall I see you gaze with your eager eyes
Where life in its varied contour lies,
Stretched out to the verge of the evening skies ?

Or if, e'er then, in the grave I lie,
I shall know if you wander by ;
Shall hear your steps as you lightly pass,
With the buoyance of youth, o'er the graveyard grass ;
Shall turn my head with a smile as I hear
Your laugh in the sunshine ring bright and clear ;
Settle again to my longed-for rest,
Glad to know it is manifest
Your heart is glad and your hours are blest.

C. J. C.

THE QUEEN'S REPOSE

THICK curtains hid the doorway on the stairs ;
Rich curtains, poppy-hued and decked with gold ;
So that no murmur from the banquet-hall,
(In that vast palace on the Jumna plain),
Reached the deep silence of the queen's repose.

Beyond the curtains—heavy, poppy-hued—
A slumbrous twilight filled the spacious room ;
Night's darkness lessened by the light of lamps
That glowed, like flowers, through the coloured glass—
Green as the eyes of snakes, red as hearts' blood,
Blue as the noon-day sky, gold as the west
When sunset gleams above the line of hills.
Dim fires burnt in braziers of bronze ;
The brooding flames of gums and perfumed woods,
Spice-fed—the fires of love unsatisfied.

The waiting-women of the sleepless queen
Crouched, dozing, round the walls—save near her bed
Two favoured women watched her need of rest.
She lay within the shadows—dimly seen ;
Soft, graceful, noble curves of stately limbs
Prone, idle, useless. Thus the flower lies
A careless youth plucks from the swinging bough
Across a garden wall ; he plays with it ;
Then heedless flings it in the roadside dust.
At times a gem shone as it caught the light
Of some near lamp—as a chain slid across
The wonder of her breasts ; or else her hand
Sought vainly in the empty space—then gleamed
The bracelets on her arm. Her eyes were fixed
In never-shifting stare at the blank gloom
Which hid the chamber's entrance, where the folds
Of the rich curtains met and lay untsirred.

One of the favoured women touched a lute ;
She wok its silent strings and murmured low
A song of love, in dreamy cadences.
But the queen raised her hand to stop the notes ;
All that she wished to hear was one strong voice
Breathe tenderly her name.

The other strove to win her thoughts by jewels
Brought from the ivory casket's hidden depths.
She held up threefold chains—long strings of gems
And swung them lightly like festoons of flowers
When a lamp's radiance made them brightly shine,
Like the clear dewdrops in the morning sun
Beneath the covert of the clustered leaves.
The queen nor moved nor saw—he would not praise
Though she should deck herself in every jewel
That was his gift. Nay, he would never see.

So stillness breathed once more within the room ;
Save when a maiden, lately come to court,
Muttered, " A dancing girl ! who tinkles false
Hung round with tawdry spoils of long bazaars.
If I for such were scorned, no lonely watch—."
Quickly the others silenced her with looks
Of keen reproach.

Slowly the night wore on. Dawn glimmered pale
Across the snows that crowned the mountain range ;
The bright stars dimmed, a sigh of fresher air
Awoke the land to meet another day.
But in the queen's room still the lamps dispersed
The shadows in the perfume-deadened gloom.
Still the queen lay in restless supineness ;
The women watched. Again the king delayed
His longed for coming.

C. J. Cole

" The Manuscript" is published annually by, and on behalf of, the Manuscript Club, of which it is the organ and expression. MSS. submitted for publication in the forthcoming issue should be addressed to the Actiny Editor, Mr. J. G. Bott, at 20 *Firs Mansions, Muswell Hill, N., not later than June* 1*st*, 1917.

Copies of this, the third number, may be obtained from the Secretary of the Club, Mr. G. J. Peach, at 6 *Maze Road, Kew, Surrey. The price is one shilling per copy ; postage* 1½*d. per copy extra.*